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## *STUDIES* *IN* *COMPARATIVE RELIGION*

BY  
ALFRED S. GEDEN, M.A.

**London:**

CHARLES H. KELLY,

2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD.; AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1898.

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March 1898.

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IN  
COMPARATIVE RELIGION

BY  
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AT THE  
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London:  
CHARLES H. KELLY,  
2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD.; AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
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To

My Fellow-Students

Past and Present

of Richmond College

HASKELL

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## P R E F A C E

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THE following chapters consist in substance of lectures given during successive years in the ordinary course of my duties at Richmond. In form also I have thought it best that they should be printed as originally delivered; although in the nature of things an opportunity was then afforded for illustration and expansion, which the hard and fast limits of a published book do not admit. An attempt has occasionally been made to supply this lack by a brief footnote. To recast all into the conventional shape of essays would have been comparatively easy. It appeared to me however that what would thereby be gained by the removal of a few repetitions, or by greater formality and precision of phrase, would be more than lost in vividness and directness of presentment. The lectures moreover are avowedly introductory, intended to set forth facts rather than to enunciate theories. Except so far as

might serve to stimulate independent thought, I have not regarded it as part of my duty to criticise the speculations of others, or to formulate my own; believing that the best corrective to an ill-considered hypothesis is a simple statement of truth. Those for whom the following studies were originally conceived and written will have no difficulty in recognising them; and if to these, my fellow-students, a phrase or thought here and there recalls hours spent together to mutual profit, and revives an old interest, I am well repaid.

I would venture however to hope that these brief outlines may be of service to others than those for whom they were first prepared; to the large number of thoughtful and earnest men, to whom a busy life does not permit the luxury of much reading, or of direct investigation into subjects of paramount importance for the mental and spiritual history of our race, and the development of the powers of the human mind and heart. It is in this hope that I have taken upon myself to add another book to the rapidly growing literature of Comparative Religion, already abundantly furnished with hand-books and introductions. To say that I am conscious of the defects of my own contribution to the right understanding of so vast and complex a subject would be to say little. On the other hand had any of the

"Introductions" referred to been in my judgment sufficient and perfect the present volume would not have appeared. It is offered then as a contribution, not claiming for itself or pretending to perfection even within the limited lines prescribed, but aiming at an ideal which ever seems to recede the more diligently and unreservedly it is pursued.

The incompleteness of a work on Comparative Religion, from which is excluded all reference to the great religions of India and the far East, Buddhism, and Brahmanism with its off-shoots and descendants, will at once be obvious. The defect is unavoidable, and due to the form of the series in which the present volume is included. It will be remedied I trust at no distant date by the issue of a companion volume of Studies in Eastern Religions, in the preparation of which I have been for some time engaged. The two books will however be entirely independent of one another.

Both in the selection of the religions to be discussed, and in the method of their treatment, I have been guided by an estimate of their comparative importance in human history. The drift and tendency of recent literature on this subject appears to me seriously to err, when it confines itself so largely to prospecting the

sources from which religion in its many forms has sprung. That a true understanding of *origins* is of the first importance no one can deny; for without them no conclusions are possible. But to make of Comparative Religion a mere inquisition into origins is like judging of the perfect fruit by a dissection of the immature embryo. The crude and childish beliefs of savages, their fancies and their folk-lore, their ceremonies and customs, are interesting, and often point to something wiser and nobler. But when they have all been marshalled in order, classified and labelled, scarcely an approach has been made to the building up of a sound doctrine of Comparative Religion. A foundation has been laid, that is all; and not always, it is to be feared, firm and true, but on ground much mixed with sand. In the raising of the superstructure account must be taken of the greatest and best products and developments of the religious sense of man,—of every element, whether in the most highly-organized and articulated religious system, or the structureless bodies of primitive belief. To the latter attention has been too exclusively directed. The former must resume their rightful place at the head, if Comparative Religion is to justify her claim to the title of a science.

The second principle that it has been my endeavour to keep in mind, and without assigning to it undue prominence to illustrate and set forth, is the influence of external surroundings on the development of religious forms and life. The constant pressure which these exert on the physical frame is at once and by all recognised; their effect in moulding and instructing the mind is less patent perhaps, is mediated and indirect, but not as it appears to me one whit less universal and real. The mind, it is true, possesses a power of resistance to environment and of self-direction, which is denied to the body. It is less at the mercy of the forces that play on and around it. But if religion is in any sense whatever a growth, an evolution, not a spiritless and dead fabric, then it is a growth largely influenced and conditioned by external circumstances and tendencies.<sup>1</sup> By what means, or in what way that environment makes its influence felt is a question for Psychological science, not for Com-

<sup>1</sup> It may be permissible to refer in illustration to the Reform movement among the Jews of the United States; where the most conservative religious body in the world is bringing itself into line with the enlightened thought and practice of to-day by the adoption of radical changes in modes of worship and conditions of membership, in order to meet the needs of modern life both within and without the church.

parative Religion. It is enough for the present that its effects, complex as they are and frequently overridden by the action of other causes, may still be traced with sufficient certainty. Some of these results I have sought to point out in the following studies.

The transliteration of Oriental and other names is guided by the usual rule. Consonants are pronounced as in English, vowels as in Italian. Where a word has become virtually Anglicized, I have not thought it worth while to make a change [in the ordinary and accepted spelling. The names of some of the early Khalifs are cases in point. It is difficult however to draw the line between an inconsistency on this ground permissible, and a stiff precision that savours of pedantry. But I trust that the course adopted will in general meet with approval.

In the brief selection of titles of books prefixed to each chapter no attempt has been made, as will be at once seen, to give a complete bibliography of even the English works dealing with the subject in hand. The aim has been merely to make convenient reference to those which are most readily accessible, and appear to me to be most reliable and helpful. It will be apparent to all that the list is far from exhaustive. With one or two exceptions the



books named have been constantly by my side in writing these lectures; to many others, too numerous to mention, I am under greater or less obligation. Throughout, however, the needs have been kept in mind not of the advanced student or philosopher, but of those who stand on the threshold of a world-wide and fascinating study; and this study I would fain hope some at least may be led to prosecute, to the rich and fruitful increase of their sympathy with and insight into the mind of man searching after God.

ALFRED S. GEDEN.

RICHMOND,  
*March* 1898.



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## INTRODUCTION AND ORIGINS

LITERATURE.—C. P. Tiele, *Outlines of the History of Religion*, London, 1892; F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, new edition, London, 1893; Hibbert Lectures on the *Origin and Growth of Religion*, 1878; and four volumes of Gifford Lectures on *Natural, Physical, Anthropological and Psychological Religion*, 1888–92; W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, new edition, London, 1894; G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 vols., London, 1895; F. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 2 vols., London, 1890; F. B. Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, London, 1896; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, articles on Religions, Totemism, etc.; J. S. Banks, *Christianity and the Science of Religion*, London, 1879.

Convenient Hand-Books are: G. M. Grant, *Religions of the World*, new edition, London, 1895; Allan Menzies, *History of Religion*, London, 1895; De La Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, London, 1891.

## INTRODUCTION AND ORIGINS

THE student of Origins and of Comparative Religion must be prepared to grapple with problems of no little difficulty and complexity; to bring to bear all the forces of training and culture upon questions important, delicate, and keenly debated; to concentrate attention upon details, and to draw circumspectly the widest generalisations; justly to appreciate the value of side-lights, and to recognise common principles among diverse practices; to be patient in collecting facts, cautious and slow to set aside anything as immaterial, and to distrust hasty and obvious conclusions. Above all must he exercise the largest charity towards his fellow-students, and towards the forms of belief and habits of thought which constitute the immediate objects of his study. In these and similar investigations it will not be ordinarily possible,—nor in my judgement would it be wise if possible, or conducive to the successful prosecution of our research,—to divest ourselves of convictions as to the unapproached excellence

of that religion which we hold to be superior to all others, the religion which Jesus Christ established and maintains. But it would argue a poor faith in that religion to refuse to submit it to the quiet testing light of history, of reason, and of science. Creeds or practices which will not stand that test are not of the truth, from whatever other source they may have sprung. That is but a narrow mental and spiritual outlook which is unsolicitous about, or uninterested in the beliefs and hopes of other peoples; who guard their own faith with as intense and jealous an affection as we do ours. We may not forget, in the light of the brotherhood of man, that if we hold Christianity to be the best, there are many, not all ignorant or uncultured men, who place on a similarly high and lofty pedestal Buddhism, or the service of the Prophet of Islâm,—the creed, whatever it may be, which has grown into their hearts and lives from their very birth.

**Principles of Investigation.** — It is essential, therefore, that we take our stand here on purely historical grounds; that we endeavour to work by induction from ascertained facts as to the early or later religious beliefs of men, and to shun ready-made theories. If speculation and hypothesis refuse to be altogether excluded, it will be well to assign them as narrow a sphere,



and as limited an exercise as possible. A further inquiry will pass in review the chief formal religions of the world in the light of their origin and development, their growth, and if necessary decline; will place the various systems of human belief side by side for purposes of mutual comparison, to note points of likeness and unlikeness, and to trace, as far as may be, the lines on which the mind of man has groped its way towards God. For the sake of precision it will be necessary to define, if only provisionally, the object that is to be kept in view. The *Origins* of religion are first to be investigated, the early efforts of man towards the light, the way or ways in which he has approached the all-important question of his relationship to an unseen power, and of the nature of that power. Following this discussion, which here and now can only be of the character of a brief introduction, will come the evidence for the crystallization of these beliefs into the various religious systems, the work of their founders and teachers in moulding thought and directing action. Lastly some account must be given of the systems themselves, their influence on one another and on the outside world.

**Definition.** — For a working definition then, which is neither exhaustive nor beyond the

reach of criticism, but which it will be easy to supplement or correct hereafter, let the following suffice. That by the study of Comparative Religion is meant nothing more than a systematic endeavour to classify the various religions of the world, to ascertain their mutual relationship, with the common principles and ideas, if any, which they presuppose, and to present an orderly and historical account of human belief and practice with regard to the supernatural and the unseen. When this has been done, an answer will more readily be found to the question, What is Religion? For this is a term which has been as variously defined and expounded as the nature of man himself,—definitions that have often perplexed rather than elucidated the meaning; from the classic interpretation of Cicero<sup>1</sup> down through the numerous suggestions or explanations put forward, which have rather seized upon some peculiar or unique characteristic of the subject than conveyed a knowledge of the subject itself. The word however in ordinary language seems to be used to express a more or less

<sup>1</sup> Qui autem omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinent, diligenter retractarent et tanquam relegerent, sunt dicti religiosi ex relegendo, ut elegantes ex eligendo, ex diligendo diligentes, ex intellegendo intellegentes. His enim in verbis omnibus inest vis legendi eadem quae in religioso. *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 28.

systematized and organized collection of ideas on man's relation to a power external to himself, to which he owes obligation, and from which he deprecates injury or hopes for favour. Sometimes however the word, or its derivatives, is employed to denote the faculty that takes cognisance of such ideas. Not that all the conceptions referred to are present in every case in the same degree; or that in the absence of one or more of them we must refuse to concede the existence of a religion at all. On the contrary, in savage and even civilised peoples ideas are often rudimentary and vague, which are yet capable of high and spiritual development. It would not be difficult so to contract and hedge about our definition of religion as to exclude such as these. It would however be a mistake, on the lower ground of expediency, as well as on the higher of right. At least provisionally, it is well to give to the scope and sphere of our inquiries here as wide an interpretation as possible. In attempting to deal with a subject of this kind we are little likely to see cause to regret our liberality.

**Religious Ideas Universal.** — The claim has often been made, not in the name or interest of religious prepossessions only, but of cold scientific truth, that there is no people so inert and

degraded as to be without some conception of a God. Or to put it more exactly, some belief in a higher power external to themselves, a belief hazy and ill-outlined it may be, but still real; in a power that can help or injure, and to which reverence and service are due.<sup>1</sup> Man has been rightly, though far from adequately defined as a religious animal. The lowest most ignorant savage conceives of spirits, ghosts, fetiches in some form or another. Probe him to the bottom, and you arrive at the idea or ideas that the world of living beings which he touches and sees does not exhaust the sum total of existence. There is something beside and beyond, to which he can only perhaps give a fanciful name, or no name at all, but which is as real to his perception as the comrade who stalks by his side. This conclusion has, as is well known, been challenged and contradicted. Travellers have returned home, bringing in absolute good faith reports of tribes and peoples, in whom they declared themselves unable to discover the faintest trace of a belief in the supernatural; men who were asserted to

<sup>1</sup> Religious ideas of one kind or other are almost universal. . . . The universality of religious ideas, their independent evolution among different primitive races, unite in showing that their source must be deep-seated instead of superficial.  
HERBERT SPENCER.

be as destitute of any conception of a divine or semi-divine power as the flowers and trees, the rocks and streams, amongst which they dwelt. In every case, however, in which a thorough examination and sifting of the evidence has been practicable, it has been proved that the report was mistaken. Nor was the source of the error far to seek. When not the fruit of conscious or unconscious bias, it has been generally traced to one of two causes: on the one hand, to imperfect acquaintance on the part of the traveller with the language and habits of the people referred to, so that either his questions were unintelligible to them, or their answers unintelligible to him, perhaps both; on the other, to the natural timidity and reserve, which savages like children manifest in the presence of comparative strangers. Instances have been known where for years such peoples will conceal their religious practices and beliefs from men of another race living in their midst; the fact being that, with the touch of nature which makes all men kin, they have refused to confide their inmost thoughts and convictions to an unsympathetic and possibly contemptuous interrogator. It may fairly be assumed that, in the few remaining examples where complete evidence or refutation is not forthcoming, the reported atheism of a tribe or

nation is not real, but merely the reflection and hasty conclusion of our own ignorance.

### Origin and Growth of Religious Ideas. —

The question as to the path by which so universal a conception of the presence and activity of the supernatural has been reached by man is one demanding very careful consideration; not to be set aside off-hand by the postulate of a primitive revelation. The answer to which, moreover, will be as dependent upon a true psychology, a clear and definitive understanding of the nature of man, as upon a rigorous and scientific history of religious belief. The limits of time and space will not admit of more now than a few suggestions on this wide and difficult subject.

**Nature Worship.** — In the earliest dawn of history, that is of religious history which does not necessarily or usually run parallel with the centuries, but which, like the stone and iron ages, differs in point of time with different races, the religious instinct is seen manifesting itself in forms of nature worship, offerings and reverence paid to the *phenomena* of the universe, to the visible objects of the heaven above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. Upon primitive man the most vivid and powerful impressions would be made, not by things which

appealed to his mental consciousness, which indeed scarcely existed save in embryo, but by those which concerned his external relationships, his need of food, of shelter, and the preservation of his life. To him the play of the lightning, the resistless roll of the flood, the mighty grip of the frost, or the headlong terror of the whirlwind betoken his gods; that is to say, powers outside of and beyond himself, which he is unable to control, but which seem to hold him fast in an unreasoning relentless grasp, and to make him the plaything of their caprice; to which, therefore, he naturally attributes a will and determination such as he is himself conscious of possessing. In the lowest forms of savage life, when the whole energies are bent upon and absorbed in the endeavour to provide daily sustenance or to meet daily peril, the religious instinct finds expression in attempts to avert the evil which experience has taught man the powers of nature may inflict, or to secure some good which they appear to him to be able to bestow. With these forces he comes into direct daily conflict. And in their presence he bows himself, since they are stronger than he, in fear and worship.

**Personification of Nature Powers.**—But why should he ascribe to these a personality, and a

benevolent or malevolent will? Why should he suppose that they themselves are living beings, or are actuated by living beings, who consciously determine this or that, and may be affected by his prayers and gifts? The answer seems to be that it is because the only power of which he has any direct experience, namely his own, is as he knows and feels the outcome of a personal will and determination. He himself works and acts as the result of the life within. And by a kind of rough analogy he ascribes to these objects or forces, which he sees in action around him, a kindred life, superior in some sort to his own, inasmuch as their acts are greater and more effective. The doings of his fellow-men he can understand. They are the product of beings like himself, neither mysterious nor more powerful. But the forces of nature work on a transcendently greater scale. There must, therefore, be in them a transcendently greater personality and life.

All this supposes little or no reasoning or thought. It is merely the ascription of external forces to similar causes to those of which he is himself conscious within. The first advance on the road to higher and more refined conceptions will come when he begins to reflect on the meaning and relations of the surrounding



phenomena,—the how, the wherefore, and the whither of things present and visible. The earliest speculation, therefore, busies itself with religious ideas and the objects of religious worship. Nor is there any known exception to this law. Explore the beginnings of philosophy, of scientific experiment, of civilisation itself, and it will be universally found that they have their roots in, and grow up from thoughts and aspirations which belong to the sphere of religion. This is then the second stage in the intellectual awakening and progress; wherein the mind of man ponders on, and endeavours to penetrate into the meaning and character of the powers of nature and of the universe arrayed and in action before it. May not these be the varied instruments and faculties of a yet higher and unseen power, whose behests they observe, and to which they are ever submissive, even as the hand and the foot, the eye and the ear are obedient to the will of the man himself? The answer to this question, which thought and reason give, must almost of necessity be in the affirmative. It is the ultra-refinement of the old age of speculation, not the primitive and childlike freshness, which returns a negative. And the conclusion at once follows of belief in a god behind and above the forces of nature,

whose servants they are, and to whom therefore must be transferred man's entire allegiance and worship and fear; a god or gods,—for it is not to be understood that at first this path would either naturally or inevitably lead to monotheism,—as much transcending in majesty and greatness the visible universe, as it transcends poor puny man; but whom man meets and touches in thought, although he cannot lay hold of him with his bodily senses. In the view of many whose judgement is entitled to respect, it is on some such lines as these that the mind of man has travelled upwards to conceive of and to worship the unseen God in heaven.

**Ancestor Worship.**—A second form, in which among primitive peoples feelings of reverence and adoration manifest themselves, is that of ancestor worship, the worship of the spirits of the dead, conceived of as under some conditions or other still alive. Not indeed that it is to be understood that savage man analyses the processes of his own consciousness, as the philosopher or psychologist would do. But the case stands somewhat thus. His friend, his brother, his comrade-in-arms dies. That is a sensible and startling fact, which needs no elaborate train of reasoning to bring it home to his mind. What has happened? Exter-

nally he is little altered, apart from the accidents of a violent death. The hands, the head, the breast, all the organs of the body are there unchanged; nothing indeed differs, as far as the eye can see, from the living man of a few seconds before. But the breath is gone; that mysterious, invisible, intangible something, which vitalised the entire frame, and gave power of motion and action to the limbs; and to which he found the nearest analogies in the breath of the lower animals and the winds of the heaven. The whole apparent difference between the man living and the man dead lies here,—in the latter there is no breath. And however often he looked upon a corpse, whether of a man or a beast, the same conclusion is consistently presented to his thought,—the breath has vanished. Whatever name therefore he gave to this mysterious principle, the presence of which universally denoted life with all its activities and enjoyments, its absence the dullness and inertness of death; whether he named it wind or spirit or breath,—and these three are habitually confused in primitive and often in later language, and therefore in primitive thought,<sup>1</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> The confusion of language is of course the result, not the cause of the confusion of thought; but it undoubtedly reacts upon, and tends to perpetuate the latter.

it would inevitably appear to follow that here was the principle and secret of life. Further, since there was no reason to suppose that the breath perished when it left the body; invisible before, it was neither more nor less invisible now; he would naturally conceive of it as still breathing, still moving, still manifesting itself in activities of speech and action, but now withdrawn from his sight and contact. The breath is the spirit, and the spirit is the breath. Precisely then in this mysterious character, evading the grasp of his mind or bodily senses, lies that which fits the spirit, marks it out as a meet object of his awe and worship. In the conception of man untutored by civilisation and the arts, that which is incomprehensible dwells hard by that which is supernatural, and which claims his homage. The two ideas are not distinct, but confused together almost to the point of identification. While the man lived, his spirit, mysterious though it might be, displayed itself only in ways familiar, and through the medium of a visible tangible body. Now he is dead, his spirit is certainly not in the flesh, and it is impossible to tell in what mischief it may be engaged. Let us worship it, to deprecate its wrath lest it do us harm; and in the second place,—for

this would appear always to come second,—to win its favour, that it may do us good.

**Totemism.**—A third early and widespread form in which the religious instincts of man exhibit themselves is that of *Totemism*. By which term is to be understood the theory or system of religious belief and practice, which holds sacred a particular class of animate or inanimate objects, usually the former; the totem or object of regard being in most cases some wild and well-known animal, which the tribe or people reverence, and after which they frequently call themselves. The word has been adopted from the language of the Ojibway Indians, amongst whom and the other Indian tribes of North America the system appears to have reached its greatest development. This peculiar form of belief is constantly met with among savage and uncivilised peoples at the present day; and seems in the earlier periods of the world's history to have been yet more widely prevalent. The mythology and religious practices of ancient Egypt rest in many respects upon a basis of primitive totemism. The same is true of the Babylonians and their successors and spoilers the Assyrians. Some writers would go further, and assert that all Semitic peoples were originally totemistic. In

the present state of our knowledge, the assertion is far too sweeping, and cannot be proved. But with almost every advance in the right understanding of the conditions and habits of life among primitive men has come a clearer perception of the wide range of ideas and observances, which point to totemism. Among the ancestors of the Greeks and Romans, of the Celts and Germans, traces of such beliefs have been found. To come down to modern times, the Indian tribes of America both North and South have been, probably without an exception, worshippers of the totem. It is said, on the other hand, that the Eskimo are distinguished by the entire absence of these or similar conceptions. The native races of Australasia, both on the mainland and in the islands, the inhabitants of Fiji, Borneo, Sumatra, Java, and the neighbouring regions, are characterized by like beliefs. Amongst the forest tribes of Bengal and other parts of India, and the wild aboriginal peoples of China, Japan, and Formosa, religious customs still observed bear witness to a totemistic origin. And in Africa, both amongst the negroes of the West Coast, the Bechuanas of the South, and others, beliefs and practices of the same kind are maintained up to the present day.

The totem then differs from an idol or fetich, living or dead, in that the name is applied, not to this or that individual to the exclusion of all others, but equally to every member of a species or class, who are all held in precisely similar regard and honour. The wolf, the dog, the beaver, the bison, to give instances out of many that might be cited, were each the totem of a particular tribe or tribes in North America. And the relation in which a man stood to his totem was conceived to be of the same character as that between the individual and his fellow-tribesmen, or the members of his own family. It was therefore a connection of mutual help, co-operation and protection, the bond of which was often felt to be more close than even that of blood-relationship. The man will under no circumstances injure or destroy the object which is his totem; he will cherish it, hold its life sacred, and seek to promote in every way its well-being. On the other hand, the totem, though hostile and dangerous to all beside, will do no harm to the members of the clan or tribe, whose totem it is, but will give them assistance, and provide for their safety and happiness. In some instances, the appearance of the totem is regarded as ominous of good or of evil. Often there is found to be a superstitious reluctance to

use its name, to touch or even to look at it. Not improbably the law of *tabu* in the Polynesian islands and elsewhere has its ultimate ground in, or at least is intimately connected with totemistic ideas. More curious still, on anniversaries and special occasions, such as births marriages the festivals of the seasons etc., the tribesman will dress himself in the skin of his totem, and thus arrayed will posture and dance, or go through the prescribed ceremonies. Compare the bear-dance of the North American Indians described by George Catlin, vol. i. p. 244 f.

Three different kinds or classes of totem are to be distinguished:—(1) the *clan* totem, which is common to every member of a clan or tribe. (2) The *sex* totem, held sacred by every male or female respectively of the tribe, but with no relation to the opposite sex; this kind has hitherto, so far as I know, been met with only in Australia. (3) The *individual* totem, the peculiar and private possession of a single individual, and unconnected with any other. Further, it would appear as though in some cases a clan or tribe has broken up into several sub-clans, each of which has adopted as its totem some part of the animal, which was the totem of the whole clan. Thus have arisen



families or tribes which regard the head, or the foot, or other portion of the body as sacred, as the totem, but not the entire animal.

Over and above its religious aspect, totemism also implies and demands the observance of certain social duties and restrictions. The chief of these are with regard to marriage. The members of the same clan, having the same totem, might not intermarry. And precisely as between the individual and his totem there existed kindly relations of mutual helpfulness and goodwill, so the fellow-tribesmen were bound together by their common totem in a union which was more durable and stringent than the ties even of family or friendship. Thus the clan became as it were a close corporation, the members of which were pledged to one another to afford mutual protection and assistance to the utmost of their power. Nor is it easy to exaggerate the influence which a system such as this would have in the welding together and development of ancient society.

Of the origin of conceptions so peculiar and widespread no clear or satisfactory account has been given. It may be that the key to their rise and popularity is to be found in the idea of a common life shared in by animals and man; and that the religious regard, or bond of connec-

tion, originating in this idea, was afterwards extended to embrace plant-life, and in rare instances inanimate objects. This explanation however hardly appears sufficient to account for the distinct and varied forms which totemism has assumed. The manner and time of its birth is hidden among the secrets of the past. And for the present, at least, on this subject of great interest and obscurity we must be content to wait for further light.

**Classification of Religions.** — Various essays have been made at a classification of religions, which should in due form exhibit their relationship, and set forth their genealogy. But the results have not been altogether satisfactory. A more difficult subject, or one that submits itself less to the processes of a strict logic, it is not easy to conceive. By Professor Max Müller, who has done more than any other writer to promote in England the fair and dispassionate study of comparative religion, the view has been maintained that the growth of religious thought runs parallel with that of language, and that therefore a true science of the origin of speech will prove itself also a science of the origin and development of religion. In which theory there resides at least this element of truth, however strange and unlikely it may appear in other

respects ; that we are all of us much under the dominion of words, only the practised philosopher distinguishes readily and habitually between the object and its name, and peoples who are cousins in speech are very likely to be cousins also in thought. Further than this the evidence hardly carries us, and falls far short, as it appears to me, of establishing so wide a generalisation, as that which would link together man's earliest attempts at language with his earliest ventures in the field of religious aspiration and thought. Philology, if this were true, would be the key to comparative religion. The key however only half turns the lock ; and leaves the secret of the nature and birth of religious ideas still undisclosed.

**Religions Natural or Revealed.** — Other proposed classifications have been rough and superficial, offering little of interest. As, for example, the distribution of all religions into the two classes of natural and revealed. A distinction which corresponds to no real essential or inherent difference, and which therefore gives no help towards a true understanding of the character and growth of religious thought. For in the first place all the higher and organized systems of religion make for themselves the same claim to have their origin in a divine revelation, however communicated, and deny the

rights or pretensions of all others. The classification therefore will differ according as it is drawn up by a Brahman, a Jew, a Christian, or a Muhammadan; neither is there any near prospect of a mutual agreement on this point. More serious still is the consideration that such an arrangement begs the question, when it proposes to substitute for a scientific determination of relationship and place, made after due research and dispassionate consideration of facts, an *a priori* assumption that this or that religion rests on a different basis, and originates in a different manner from others. Before we can classify religions as natural or revealed, we must come to some agreement as to the definition, the characteristics, the limits of revelation; must discover these characteristics present in some, and attain to certain conviction of their absence from other religions; must, to our own and others' satisfaction, accomplish the task of sorting out the varied beliefs of man into those due to his own unaided or intuitive efforts, and those communicated to him from without; must, in a word, know what revelation is, and where and where only it is to be traced. There is little probability that any serious student of comparative religion will lay claim to such knowledge; if he does, it is still less probable that anyone will be

found to agree with him. We shall be halted on the threshold of our inquiry, unless it is allowed to us to start free from all prepossessions, to follow whither truth and the facts lead us.

**True or False.** — A similar objection lies against the ordinary qualification of religions as true or false, namely that it corresponds to no absolute, essential, and universally accepted distinction. Not that such a division is impossible and incorrect,—it must on the contrary hold good, save to the small minority who regard all religions as equally true and equally false. But that it is of necessity purely subjective, and therefore inadmissible here and now from a strictly scientific point of view. In every religion, using the word in its broadest sense of the sum total of the beliefs that pass under a given name, there is a human element, which some will assert to be co-extensive with the religion itself, and others will minify and reduce to the smallest dimensions. An element therefore is present, which is liable to error, and fruitful of false conclusions and practices. Absolute perfect unmingled truth is not found anywhere even in Christian beliefs and observances. On the other hand, he would be a bold man who ventured to deny that in all the chief religions at least of

the world there dwelt some truth, obscured and overborne perhaps by prevalent error,—a streak of fine gold scarcely recognisable amid its baser surroundings,—which testified to an upwardreaching forth after purity and holiness. Least of all can he who holds the Christian faith venture to assert that in the hearts of any, even the most degraded peoples, God has left Himself without a witness; that their creed and practice is utterly bad, root and branch, with no glimmer of truth shining from out of the dark shadows. Search wisely and well; and while nine-tenths, or more if you will, may be false, hopelessly, irretrievably false, the remnant will be true, even if the truth be not looked at in the customary light, or set forth in the wonted formulæ. In most instances each man claims that his own religion is trustworthy and assured, and denounces all others. There is not here a satisfactory basis for a historical and scientific classification.

**Sacred Books.** — Religions again have been described as destitute of, or possessing a sacred book, to which is attributed a divine origin and character. Judaism, Christianity, Muhammadanism, and others will stand on one side; the Greek and Roman faiths, the ancient Celtic religion, with many besides will occupy a second place. The division is highly mechanical, and can hardly be

said to serve any useful purpose. Neither is it entirely reliable. The apparent absence of a sacred book or books may in some cases be due merely to our own ignorance. A fuller acquaintance with the life, intellectual and spiritual, of the people in question would bring to light writings, which in their regard were wholly unique and worthy of reverence. Considering then how little we know comparatively of the literature or beliefs of many ancient and modern races, it is somewhat perilous to found much argument upon a seeming defect, which after all may not be real. . At the best little is thus gained of real insight into the nature and affinities of a given creed or practice.

**Other Modes of Classification.**—Other principles or methods of classification that have been suggested may be very briefly recorded. The first is connected with so influential a name as that of Professor Whitney, who in his *Science of Religion* would draw a distinction between those faiths which have grown up as the result of the collective efforts, as it were, and wisdom of a nation, and those which owe their existence to the genius and labours of an individual founder. The distinction is real, and in general one that is easily made. It does not however appear to me to be of much practical value. While in

some instances the debt of the nominal founder and originator to his nameless predecessors may be so great, that it would be more just to give to him the name of reformer. Or again religions may be divided into natural and ethical, according to the principle, mere nature-worship on the one hand, or morals on the other, which carries most weight in their teaching and ritual. Here again the difference is substantial, and of much importance. But the carrying out of such a classification presents grave, almost insuperable difficulties. Undoubtedly some religions are predominantly naturalistic, and others predominantly ethical. The majority however will belong to a third class, in which the natural and ethical elements are so nicely balanced that it is not easy to decide on which side of the line they should be placed. Nor when a position has been assigned to them, have we made thereby much advance towards a true comprehension of their origin, their relationships, and their claims.

**Classification by National Relationship.**—A much more promising and helpful system of arrangement is that which looks upon religions from, as it were, an external point of view, and endeavours to classify them, and to determine their affinity, according to the nations or groups



of nationalities by whom they have been accepted. In other words, a grouping on the basis of race and historical connection and descent is likely to afford much more real assistance in comprehending the nature and mutual relations of the different religions, than any artificial distribution by features selected more or less at random. Thus to take the two great groups, the Indo-European and the Semitic, there may readily be drawn certain broad lines which mark the religious characteristics of each. Forty or more years ago Ernest Rénan attributed to the Semite a "monotheistic instinct"; meaning thereby nothing more than that in him there existed a tendency to develop belief in the direction of monotheism,—a tendency which of course in many of the Semitic peoples never found opportunity to display itself.<sup>1</sup> As compared with the Indo-European, theirs is a cold stern nature, simpler and perhaps on the whole more practical, but restricted in its outlook, and generally confining its energies to some half-

<sup>1</sup> "In my opinion, he (Rénan) has rightly attributed to the Semites a peculiar genius for religion; rightly maintained their inferiority to the Aryans as regards both imagination and speculation; and rightly indicated how their inferiority in these respects favoured their attainment of a simpler, more elevated, and more ethical idea of the Divine." Flint, *Philosophy of History*, p. 624.

dozen modes of life and action. His conception of the Divine being is more ethical and ideal, further removed from mere anthropomorphism, a superhuman royal lord rather than a deified hero or ancestor. On the lower, less intellectual side, he addicts himself to the worship of trees and stones, multiplies altars and offerings, and broadly speaking looks upon nature in her harsh and cruel aspect. The Indo-European or Aryan on the other hand is more imaginative and genial, in religious as in other matters gives free play to fancy, and if he can be said to reveal a tendency at all, it is towards polytheism and pantheism. His god is much nearer to him in speech and act, more anthropomorphic than is the god of the Semite, more readily degenerates into a simple cunning sprite or malicious demon. The "genius for religion" with which the Semite is credited,—although the phrase must not be pressed too far,—has no counterpart in the mind or character of the Indo-European. To the former his religious duties are a serious, perhaps the most serious part of his daily occupations and life. On the latter religious obligations sit comparatively lightly; they are a pleasing diversion, but no more engrossing or important than the thousand other diversions and cares, which fill up his round of existence. As to the

heterogeneous group of peoples called for want of a better name Turanian, they appear to have a position somewhat outside of these, and present diversities of character and religious conceptions, entirely parallel to their unlikeness in nature and national features. But on the whole they may be said to stand at a lower stage of development, and while inferior in civilisation and the arts to be inferior also if not in their religious capabilities, yet in their religious attainments; and to occupy ground mentally and spiritually below that of either of the other two great families of nations.

It must be repeated however that indications and distinctions such as these can never be more than general, and must not be pressed in every particular instance. There will be exceptions on all sides. The characteristics of one group will shade off into those of the next, and between them no hard and fast line can be drawn. Individual nations, like individual men, will be better or worse than their fellows; and as human nature is of infinite variety, so infinite will be the diverse forms of religious beliefs held by peoples and races, who may otherwise and in other respects be close allies. The broad features may be safely sketched. No filling in of details is possible or admissible at this stage. For this

an opportunity will be afforded later, in an exact and precise examination of each special religion.

With Semitic religions must be classed that of ancient Egypt. It is now well established and generally accepted that the Egyptian language, in spite of some striking differences, is in its groundwork at least of Semitic origin. It may be that the nation represents an earlier offshoot from the parent stem than the Arabs, the Aramæans, or even the Babylonians and Assyrians; and that, secluded in the narrow valley of the Nile, the Egyptians developed independently and on somewhat different lines, both from a linguistic and a religious point of view. To what extent again the religious beliefs, as well as the language, have influenced the peoples of Northern Africa, it is impossible at this distance of time to determine. Probably the influence was both wide and deep. Although we are almost wholly unable to recognise its traces, or to assign its limits.

The Indo-European religions are divided by Professor Tiele, than whom no higher authority is recognised on a subject which he has made his own, into five groups. The Indo-Persian, or East Aryan, which would comprise as its chief members the creed variously termed Zoroastrianism Mazdaism Magism or even Parsîism, Brah-

manism and later Hinduism, with Buddhism; Windic, the religions of the Wends and Slavs; German; Celtic; and Pelasgic or Graeco-Roman. The last is to be regarded as other than of pure Indo-European origin, being largely mingled with and influenced by Semitic ideas.

The leading Semitic faiths, past and present, besides the Egyptian, are the Babylonian and Assyrian religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Muhammadanism. Of these Christianity and Muhammadanism have received elements, both of doctrine and practice, from non-Semitic sources.

Outside and independent of these great divisions lie three sub-groups, of unequal importance. The first is the Mongolian, including the native religions of China and Japan, and in Europe of the Finns and Lapps. Second the African; by which are to be understood the beliefs and customs of the aboriginal inhabitants, as distinguished from importations from without. Of the African group, four sub-classes are usually defined,—the Cushite, of the north; the Negro, or Nigritian, of the centre and West Coast; the Bantu, largely intermingled with the last, but occupying a broad belt across the central and south-central part of the continent, from east to west; and the Hottentot, or Bushman, in

the south. The general characteristic of the Negroes and Bantus is a belief in spirits, together with fetich worship, and the practice of sorcery or witchcraft; they reverence however a great supreme Spirit, to whom all others are in more or less complete subjection. The Hottentots also appear to recognise a universal and paramount Spirit, but have no beliefs or customs of the nature of fetichism. Third and last would come the American group, including Indian forms of religion, which as we have seen are largely totemistic, and Eskimo.

• Of these religions, in their almost infinite variety, it will not be possible to pass in review more than a very small number. Our aim must be to select the chief religions of the ancient and modern world, those especially which are representative of the rest; and to submit these to as close a scrutiny and comparison as lies in our power, endeavouring from a wide and careful induction to draw some reliable conclusions on the general subject before us. The Semitic faiths come first in order of importance and of time,

# EGYPT

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## EGYPT

IN attempting a survey of the different religions of the Semitic peoples, it is most natural to begin with Egypt, both because of its antiquity, and because it stands as it were on the borderline between East and West, holding out a hand to each, the teacher and the taught both of the Indo-European and of the Semite. However difficult the task may be, it is necessary to seek to gain some conception of the beliefs of that marvellous race, whose birth lies hidden in the secret places of a dim past, whose civilisation and industry excite our wonder as we gaze upon the remnants of their works, and the vigour and persistence of whose national life finds its only, yet unequal parallel in the far East, in the ancient people and kingdom of China; to define to ourselves, if possible, what was their attitude in respect of the unseen world, what deities they worshipped, and in what relation they conceived themselves to stand towards these, their gods. Nor should it cause surprise, if in so vast and complicated a history, the beginnings of which are wholly dark to us, and in the course of

which we meet with gaps not only of years but of centuries, which are unilluminated by a single record or trustworthy tradition, there are interwoven varied and apparently independent strands, the source of which can only be guessed, and which lead to results of a complexity beyond our power to unravel. Egypt, as it stood geographically between the two continents, in name a part of Africa but with more intimate relations at least in ancient times with Asia,—a meeting-place of nations,—so appears to have gathered into itself elements from various religions, or fountains of religious belief, which acting and reacting on one another have become welded together into a whole, the parts of which are no longer to be certainly distinguished, or traced back to their respective origins.

**Knowledge Incomplete.**—It must be borne in mind also that our knowledge of Egypt and of things Egyptian is still very far from complete. The decipherment of the inscriptions has opened up a new world of history, of art, and of religion; where scholars now tread with well-grounded confidence. But the realm of the unknown, the unconquered, is still vastly greater than that of the known. Discovery follows on discovery so rapidly, that the novelty of to-day is discredited or has become the commonplace

of to-morrow. Especially is this the case with regard to Egyptian religion. The time is not yet ripe, nor are the materials available for a complete and consecutive history. In sketching the broad outlines, we can hardly go far wrong; much of the detail, the filling in, must be regarded as tentative, and subject to revision in the light of further fuller knowledge.

**Influence of Environment.** — Moreover the unique position and features of the country cannot fail to have largely moulded the religious conceptions and observances of the primitive inhabitants. Whereas in most other lands the apparent changefulness of nature, its variety and uncertainty, its storms and calms, its smiles and frowns, would create the deepest impression, in Egypt consideration would rather be claimed by nature's uniformity and regular modes of procedure. The perennial sunshine, the yearly rise and fall of the Nile, the one and only river, the unbroken routine of the seasons, would arrest attention; the *sameness* of all phenomena rather than their variety would be the lesson taught by the external world. It is scarcely fanciful to say that the very form of the country, would suggest expansion in one direction only, rather than all-round development. A land that almost answers to the definition of length with-

out breadth; a narrow green valley, closely hemmed in on either side by grey sterile desert, dependent entirely upon its river, with no scenery and no life apart from the Nile; with permanence, regularity impressed upon every aspect of surrounding nature;—should a nature-worship, a religion grounded upon natural phenomena, grow up in an environment such as this, it could hardly fail to identify itself with ideas of stability and routine, rather than with those which suggested convulsion and change. The divinities of men living under such conditions, if they at all recognise and worship gods of the seasons and the sky, will be marked by sameness rather than variety, with characters remarkable rather for consistency and likeness than for a rich diversity and contrast. The form and climate of the country, its monotony and dependence upon the one never-failing stream, would be reflected first in the minds and habits of the people dwelling there, and then in their conceptions, their mental pictures of external things,<sup>1</sup> and especially of the supernatural beings whom they believed to animate or preside over the outside world.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting description of a similar river-valley, and its effects upon its inhabitants, see Hudson's *Idle Days in Patagonia*, chaps. iii., iv.

**Early Immigrants.**—It is clear also that the early settlers in Egypt must have brought with them ideas derived from, or adopted in the land from which they came. This immigration into the valley of the Nile may naturally have taken place by any one of three routes. But no historical record or even tradition exists to give information as to which of these routes was adopted. It is possible that the first immigrants came by sea to the Delta, and thence made their way up the river. Against this theory is to be set the fact that the earliest or primitive settlements appear to have been on the river-bank in the neighbourhood of Thebes, and not in Lower Egypt, as would naturally have been the case had the newcomers first reached that part of the country. Others have believed that an entrance may have been effected by land from the south, from Nubia, the upper Sudân, and central Africa. This supposition however lies open to a similar objection, that we should then expect to hear first of the invaders higher up the river, and further south than Thebes. What light future discoveries may throw on this question, it is impossible to say. But at present the most probable theory, and one that is generally acquiesced in, is that they came by way of the Red Sea, either from Arabia, or as others hold

from the east coast of Africa and Somaliland, landing at some well-known port such as Kosseir; then crossing the short breadth of desert that separated them from the Nile, they established their earliest colonies near to where Thebes afterwards stood. This accords with all that is known of the relations of the Egyptian people, of their early movements and tradition, and may provisionally at least be accepted.

**The Colonists Semitic.** — The colonists thus entering the land were of Semitic origin; bearing with them therefore Semitic habits and modes of thought, and at least the germs of Semitic language and religion. Did they find the country unoccupied and uninhabited? Probably not. A sparse, not wholly uncivilised people would seem to have been in possession; wandering tribes, perhaps somewhat like to the nomads of central Asia, from whom their successors or conquerors, mingling with and more or less completely enslaving them, adopted manners and practices, traditions also and modes of worship, which became inextricably interwoven with their own.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that on the earliest Egyptian monuments at least three entirely different types of face and feature are represented. A fact which seems to point to the

**Aboriginal Totemism.**—These primitive peoples, of whom it must be borne in mind nothing is directly known, all is matter of inference from facts and usages that make their appearance later, practised totemism; each separate tribe or sub-tribe having as the object of its regard some animal or other inhabitant of the land or river. Upon this foundation of totem-worship were imposed the higher religious conceptions and deities of the invading Semites; whose gods became identified with the primitive totems, shared their attributes, and adopted them into their own ritual and cult. Hence at the very earliest period, the crocodile, the jackal, the bull, the cat, with others, are sacred animals, interference with which is a high crime; and the greater gods themselves are depicted in human form but with animal heads.

**Local Worship.**—At a later stage each settlement or city, representing an original clan or tribe, becomes the centre of a distinct local worship, round which are gathered the local gods, and in which reverence is paid to a particular animal, whose sanctity does not extend beyond the bounds of the city or tribal territory.

occupation of the land by three or more distinct races, living together, who for a time preserved distinct their individual characteristics and manner of life.

Instances are the worship of the bull at Thebes and Memphis, of the goat at Mendes in the Delta, the crocodile in the Faiyûm, the cat at Bubastis, and others. There can be little doubt that thus originated the *nomes* or counties into which Egypt, both Upper and Lower, was parcelled out. These were in number forty or forty-one, and represented primitive tribal divisions, which had maintained themselves through historic times, when all recollection of their origin had passed away. Further, there is no reason to suppose that the first wave of Semitic invasion and settlement was unique, and never repeated. On the contrary the probability is that it was succeeded by many others, of varying magnitude and permanence, long before history or even tradition throw any direct light on the condition of the country.

**Early Egyptian Civilisation.**—Of the length of this prehistoric era scarcely any conjecture can be formed. In the earliest period to which the records carry us back, at a date at least four or five thousand years before the birth of Christ, Egypt appears possessed of a highly complex civilisation, rich in the arts, and with science and resources at her command equal to the successful carrying out of vast works, that imply ability and skill such as have hardly been



found elsewhere up to our own day. How long a period of growth and development lies behind the first rising of the curtain on that marvellous land, who shall venture to say?<sup>1</sup> The nation must have passed through its childhood and its schooldays; but the record is unwritten in any books that it is in our power to read. Certainly no narrow interval of time separates the birth of the Egyptian people from its vigorous manhood as revealed to us on the earliest monuments.

Moreover, during the entire course of later Egyptian history there occur repetitions of that which we have seen reason to believe took place more than once anterior to all historical records, invasions namely, peaceable or hostile, of foreign

<sup>1</sup> A telegram in the *Times* of 22nd November 1897, records the discovery at N'gada in the spring of that year of the royal tomb of Menes, the first Egyptian king of whom anything is known even by tradition, and whose reign is assigned by Egyptologists to the first half of the fifth millennium before Christ. "Calcined fragments of his body are now in the Gizeh Museum, with many other objects, including obsidian vases and a dog most artistically carved in ivory, also the broken pieces of an ivory plaque which when joined showed the Ka name of Aha, and attached thereto the name borne by the Pharaoh during his lifetime, viz. Menes. These were all found in his tomb. They show that the hieroglyphic system of writing was already fully developed, and that Menes was styled King of Upper and Lower Egypt."

peoples, periods when the land came especially under the influence and domination of alien races, whose customs and modes of thought, whose national and characteristic features even left a deep impress on the habits and life of the inhabitants of the Nile valley. Egypt seems indeed to have been peculiarly susceptible to external influences, which acted upon her with great power, and under widely different circumstances, as the result both of her own foreign conquests and alliances, and of the successful attacks of her enemies. This contact however with outside forces and nations was not continuous, but was interrupted by periods of repose, often of long duration, in which the internal development of the people proceeded in complete independence of all forces from without.

**Egyptian Religion Complex and Local.**—The religion of the Egyptians, as far as it is known to us, reflects these diverse elements in the life and character of the nation. It is in possession of a rich mythology, the stores of which are only now in course of being opened out to us with the decipherment of fresh texts. Its deities are innumerable; and of these the great majority are attached to a particular locality, often with attributes and functions scarcely to be distinguished from those of the god of another

town or nome; while its practice, ritual, and creed are of the most extraordinary diversity, ranging from the merest fetichism or magic to the loftiest ideas concerning a supreme God, self-existing and eternal, creator of all things, and concerning the destiny and immortality of the soul. Their faith has been described with truth as polytheistic or as monotheistic. And the lines of its development have been assumed to be either upwards, from a primitive worship of many gods to the worship of one alone; or downwards, from an early comparatively pure monotheism to the acceptance of a debased and debasing polytheism, where the imagination ran riot in the multiplication of gods and goddesses without limit.

The truth, as usual, lies between the two extremes. If our account of the origin and rise of the Egyptian people, and of the influences brought to bear upon them, is in its broad features correct, we shall be prepared to find diverse and even contradictory elements existing side by side; the presence of which however will often be readily explicable by their history. That much is still obscure, and likely to remain so, is only to say that our knowledge both of the religious beliefs and observances of Egypt is yet far from complete.

**Local Gods.**—The various local gods were early identified with one another, and came to be regarded as merely forms or aspects of the same deity under different names. To certain of them also was assigned a position of superiority to the rest, to those in all probability which had been the patrons of the most powerful or populous centres. As each settlement or town extended its influence and authority over other towns, it would usually impose upon them its own deities, reducing the native gods to a position of inferiority and subjection. Here was a distinct tendency towards monotheism; capable of being utilised and developed by the spiritually-minded man or the philosopher, as was done for example in Greece and in India, into the conception of one supreme god, creator and lord of the crowd of lesser divinities, as well as of the material universe and of man himself. And this final step would be taken not at one time only, or in one part of the country.

**Triads.**—The gods again were frequently grouped in triads, or sets of three, consisting of the god himself, his shadow or wife, and his son. More rarely there are found groups of seven or nine. While outside of, and independent of these combinations, independent also apparently of all local attachments or relations, with a

worship and ritual extending over the whole country, stand the gods that have to do with the dead, and the world of shades below.

**Families of Gods; Ra and Osiris.**—The two chief families, or cycles of gods, as they are called, gather round the names of *Ra* and *Osiris*, with one or other of whom all the chief deities are brought into relation or identified. *Ra* represents the sun; and is indeed the ordinary word for “sun” in the Egyptian language. He sails across the sky in a heavenly boat, and carries on perpetual warfare with the powers of darkness in the form of a great serpent, who is transfixed by the weapons of the god. On the monuments he appears as a man with the head of a hawk, and is symbolized either by the figure of a hawk, or by a circle representing the sun’s disk. He is more widely revered than any other deity with the exception perhaps of *Osiris*; and presides alone over the world in absolute unrivalled power. He is also the only one of the great gods who is unprovided with a wife. To him are sacred the bull and the fabled phoenix, the latter probably as rising in renewed life from its ashes, like the sun from the darkness of the night. Under other names, names however which only describe different phases or aspects of the sun, he appears as *Ptah*, the Opener

(cf. Heb. פתח), *Tmu* or *Atmu*, the Closer, and many others. *Osiris* is also in his origin a solar divinity, but appears to have denoted the sun rather in his capacity as warming and fertilising the earth, than as ruling in the sky. He is the son of *Seb* and *Nut*, the earth (masc.) and the heaven (fem.), and is married to his sister *Isis*, the Dawn, by whom he has a son *Horus*, representing probably the midday sun or the sun in his full strength. *Isis* is pictured as a woman, having on her head the sign or emblem of a throne, with the solar disk and cow's horns. *Osiris* also takes part in the contest with the powers of evil, in this case personified in his brother *Set*, who is himself an ancient and mighty god with a widespread worship,—the god of darkness, and therefore of physical calamity and evil. By *Set* *Osiris* is overcome and slain, and descends thereupon to the nether world, to become the god of the dead. There, like *Pluto*, or *Yama* in Indian mythology, he holds his court, and judges every day the souls that appear in his presence. The death of *Osiris* is avenged by his son *Horus*, who in his turn slays *Set*, and is by him, according to one form of the myth, wounded in the eye, being therefore described as "sitting solitary in the darkness and blindness." Strangely enough, in

some texts Osiris is spoken of as the moon; illustrating how the various myths and legends had become confused together to such an extent, that borrowing seems to have taken place on all sides.

**Thoth.**—The real moon-god is *Thoth*, who is represented as ibis-headed, bearing upon his head the moon either full or more usually crescent. He answers to the Greek *Hermes*, the messenger of the gods, and in the Hall of Judgement stands by the side of *Osiris*, to record the deeds and sentence of the souls that come to be tried. He is also the patron of learning, of geometry, and of the arts.

Other well-known gods, whose names are frequently met with, and whose figures are presented in the hieroglyphic texts, are the jackal-headed *Anubis*, son of *Osiris*, whom he is said to have swallowed. He is believed therefore to have originally symbolized the evening twilight or coming darkness, which overpowers and quenches the light of the sun. Other authorities hold that at first *Anubis* was merely another name for *Osiris*.<sup>1</sup> He presides over all the processes of mummification; and in the Hall of Truth or Judgement carries the scales in which the souls of the dead or their

<sup>1</sup> P. le Page Renouf, in *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, vol. xviii. p. 168.

deeds are weighed, while Thoth writes down the result on a tablet, and Osiris pronounces sentence.

**Ptah.**—*Ptah* is the rising sun, who was worshipped chiefly in Memphis, but had a well-known sanctuary also at Thebes, where he presided over works of building and architecture. Answering to the Greek Hephæstus, the Latin Vulcan, he is the god of the manual arts; and on the monuments is depicted in human form.

**Amon.** — *Amon*, the principal divinity of Thebes, was identified with the sun-god Ra. His importance is no doubt due to the fact that Thebes was for so long a period the capital of the country. Hymns are addressed to him that breathe a spirit and use language more akin to monotheism than any found elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> At Thebes he formed one of a triad, the remaining members of which were *Mut*, the heaven, and *Khonsu*, the moon.

Other deities less widely revered than Amon, but whose names often appear on the monuments, were *Sebek*, the crocodile god, with

<sup>1</sup> For example :—Hail to thee, Amon-Ra, Lord of the thrones of the earth . . . the ancient of heaven, the oldest of the earth, Lord of all existences . . . chief of all the gods, Lord of truth, father of the gods, maker of men, creator of beasts . . . the One alone without peer. *Records of the Past*, first series, vol. ii. p. 129 ff. ; cp. Renouf, p. 224 ff.



a worship that had its centre in the Faiyûm; *Bast*, the cat-headed goddess, who presided over the city of Bubastis in the Delta; and *Hathor*, in the opinion of some, like Isis, originally the Dawn, the queen of heaven, whose sacred animal was the cow.

**Maat.**—Of one more divinity should mention be made, less definitely conceived perhaps and personified, but approaching more nearly to our ideal of a moral being, *Mat* or *Maat*, the goddess of right or truth. She is the daughter of Ra, and wife of Thoth; and appears as the impersonation of abstract Law or Right, being especially active in the lower world, of which she is queen. Her hall is the scene of the judgement of the dead before Osiris; and on the monuments she is depicted as a woman with an ostrich feather on her head, the emblem of truth. It would seem that in her was expressed and revered the strict undeviating order of things which certainly in the Egyptian view was wont to make for righteousness.

It will have been noticed even in this brief review of the more prominent gods of Egypt, that they all typify the regular and permanent aspects of nature, as distinguished from the fluctuating and transient. Deities of the rain, the cloud, the storm, etc., who hold so large a place in

the mythology for instance of India, are here almost entirely absent. This again is what we have been led to expect from a consideration of the natural features and conditions of the country itself.

**Permanence of Egyptian Religion, Customs, etc.** — In another respect also persistence, durability, seems to be written across the face of ancient Egypt. Throughout her long history, down to Ptolemaic and even Roman times, the institutions of the people, their laws and customs, remained comparatively unchanged as far as our knowledge goes. In the earliest period to which the records carry us back these appear complete, full-grown; and they neither develop greatly, nor decay.<sup>1</sup> New gods make their appearance on the scene, but they possess the same attributes, discharge identical functions, and are recognised as old friends under fresh names. So, too, one generation or dynasty builds pyramids, and another magnificent temples. But the design of both is the same, to honour the dead, and to preserve their remembrance among the living. The laws and customs of the earliest reigns do not differ essentially from

<sup>1</sup> "The same fully-developed civilisation, the same religion, calendar, political divisions, gods, and priesthoods, from the earliest to the latest times." Renouf, p. 80 f.

those which the latest kings administer, and their subjects observe. Of the many marvels of that marvellous land this assuredly was not the least, that while dynasties came and went, while now one nation and now another imposed its yoke on a long-suffering people, Egypt remained practically the same in all that most intimately concerned her faith and daily life.

**Doctrines.** — It remains to speak of the doctrines of the Egyptians, of those especially which have to do with their religious beliefs and practices, as far as they can be ascertained from the sources at our disposal. These are mainly the temples and tombs, with the inscriptions and paintings therein contained. Egypt has been well described as a land of tombs, the extent and variety of the burials in which are only beginning to be realised. The pyramids themselves were but huge tombs. The most costly temples were monuments on a great scale to the glory of the departed; and historically originated in all probability as mere adjuncts to the sepulchre proper, which the vanity and rivalry of successive generations of kings enlarged and elaborated, until that which at first was subordinate came to hold the most conspicuous place. But the intimate connection between the two was never lost sight of; and

until comparatively late times at least, every temple however magnificent was the vestibule to a tomb, or series of tombs, where the royal builder of the temple laid himself down to rest in peace. The parts of the building more immediately associated with the tomb were three in number:—(1) an upper chamber or chambers, the walls of which were decorated with pictures and writing descriptive of the life of the deceased; (2) a closed-up passage or corridor, generally facing the north, in which small statues have occasionally been found; (3) the excavated vault or pit in the rock, to which the passage led, and in which the mummy was placed.

**Belief in Immortality.**—Thus it was on the tomb that the most anxious care and forethought was expended. Egyptian religious beliefs centred in the dwelling-places of the dead, and concerned themselves above all with the after-life of those who had passed away from earth. The article of their faith which at once arrests and holds our attention is their belief in the immortality of the soul. But in discussing this doctrine it is necessary to be on our guard against prepossessions derived from Christian ideas, or the reading into Egyptian texts a breadth or significance derived from the New Testament. The tombs themselves are called “eternal

dwelling-places"; the souls of the dead are said in so many words to live everlastingly. By the first expression however it is not to be understood that provision was made in the grave for the perpetual detention there of the corpse, still less of the spirit that animated it; but rather that the tomb was regarded as in some way haunted by the spirit, for whose future use the body was as far as possible preserved from decay, in order that at the appointed time soul and body might be reunited. The soul further, when separated from the body, was not conceived of as entering into a state of unending felicity or wretchedness. After the lapse of thousands of years, it would return to take possession of the body from which it had departed. But in the interval it might inhabit other bodies, as of a bird, a beast, an insect, or a fish. This occupation however was apparently always a matter of free choice, not of compulsion or necessity, as in the ordinary doctrine of metempsychosis, taught for instance in India. Once emancipated by the death of the body, the soul was competent and at liberty to maintain an entirely independent existence, until the time came for reunion with its own body. And to this period of freedom and independence Egyptian belief set no limit or term.

**Immortal Parts of the Man.**—The individual man therefore is, as the philosophers would say, not simple but composite, made up of many parts. His living and immortal representative is properly his *Ka*, lit. image, *εἰδωλον*, sometimes translated “genius” or “double”; which is seen on the monuments in the form of a child or dwarf, in close attendance on the man, and was believed after his death to visit the tomb for the purpose of feeding on the gifts provided. To the *ka* worship was regularly offered. And the gods themselves had their *kas*, who held to them precisely the same relation as the *ka* or image of the man to the real human being. Other immortal parts of the man, separable and separated from him at death, and commencing then to lead an independent life, were his *Ba*, or soul, depicted as a bird with a human head, hovering over the corpse which it quits at the moment of death, and again restoring life when it returns from heaven. The *Ab*, or heart, confronted the dead man in the Hall of Truth, and bore witness to his deeds good or evil. The *Sáhu* was the form, *μορφή*, and the *Khaïb* the shadow; but of these two the office and function are not very apparent.

**Worship.**—Worship was offered both in the

temples and at the tombs; but in the latter case always to Osiris, or to some deity associated with him. Animal and vegetable sacrifices were presented, with libations and burning of incense. Further, upon the exact and generous performance of these ceremonies and sacrifices the well-being of the man after death was conceived to depend. If they were neglected, carelessly or improperly performed, suffering was thereby brought upon him. Hence the supreme importance of a son to see to the carrying out of the appropriate funeral rites. Priests were employed to say prayers, and endowments provided, much in the same way as in Europe money is paid for masses for the dead. The tombs therefore were centres of religious worship throughout the land, a worship which in its general features was one and the same. The temples might be and were dedicated to various gods, and in them different although probably similar ceremonial observed; a deity finds himself honoured here and neglected there; but the reverence for, and cult of Osiris, the lord of the world below, since it was associated with the tombs, was universal. Of the temples themselves again it may be noted, that they were not places of common assembly for religious worship, as ordinarily understood at the present day. But, in somewhat close analogy with the

Jewish temple at Jerusalem, a distinction was made between the outer court or courts, which were open to all, and inner sanctuaries or shrines, where none but priests were permitted to enter, and where the real worship was carried on by the privileged and initiated few. Priesthood flourished in Egypt; and the priestly class were numerous and powerful.

**Religious Literature; Book of the Dead.**—Of the religious literature of the Egyptians by far the most extensive and important part is the so-called Book of the Dead, a collection of invocations and prayers, which has been happily termed the soul's Vade-mecum in the lower world. Each prayer or invocation forms a chapter, which is supposed to be recited by the dead man at a certain stage in his journey through the underworld, as a kind of charm or talisman, by means of which he may escape the perils that surround his path. The chapters are found written upon the coffins, the mummies themselves, the walls of the tombs, and upon papyrus rolls deposited with the corpse. In the later tombs, of the 26th dynasty, *circa* 660–520 B.C., entire copies of the book have been discovered. But these copies do not agree with one another either in the number or the arrangement of the chapters. The text also is described by Sir P. le Page Renouf,



than whom there is no greater authority,<sup>1</sup> as exceedingly corrupt, and containing errors and various readings to an almost incredible extent. The most complete manuscript extant is a papyrus preserved in the Royal Museum at Turin, of uncertain date, but not earlier than the 26th dynasty, which includes one hundred and sixty-five chapters. Many chapters however, known from other sources, are omitted; and some of these are proved by internal evidence to be of great antiquity. No two manuscripts or copies moreover contain precisely the same chapters, nor are they arranged in the same order. The obscurities and difficulties of the text and of the mythological allusions are very great. A fresh translation, based on the fullest knowledge available, was begun by Renouf in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* for 1892, but has been interrupted by his death. A few extracts from this translation will make plain the character of the book.<sup>2</sup> It opens

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written Sir P. le Page Renouf has died on the 14th October 1897 at the age of seventy-seven, to the great loss of all true and modest scholarship. His translation of the Book of the Dead was nearly complete.

<sup>2</sup> In a brief preface the translator writes:—The Book of the Dead is not a book in the usual sense of the word; it is not a literary whole, with a beginning, middle, and end; it is a mere unmethodical collection of religious compositions (chapters), as

thus:—*The beginning of the chapters of coming forth by day, of the words which bring about resurrection and glory, and of coming out of and entering into Amenta.*<sup>1</sup> *Said upon the day of burial of N., the victorious, who enters after coming forth. Here is N. the victorious. He saith—*

O Bull of Amenta,<sup>2</sup> It is Thoth, the everlasting king, who is here.

I am the great god in the bark who have fought for thee.

I am one of those gods, the powers who effect the triumph of

independent of each other as the Hebrew Psalms. No two copies of the better periods contain the same chapters, or follow the same order. The text of each chapter is in the highest degree uncertain, and was already so at a very early date. The various readings arise partly from the differences of meaning attached by the copyists to certain groups of words, but in great part from the gross carelessness or ignorance of the copyists. . . . But supposing the text to be settled, difficulties of another kind beset the translator. The grammar is extremely simple, and the vocabulary is tolerably well made out. But what sense can be extracted from the text? A sentence may be quite literally rendered without its conveying the meaning of the original. . . . No one is capable of translating a single chapter of the Book of the Dead, who has wrong ideas about the religion and mythology of Egypt, and is unable to understand the numerous technical or mystical expressions which everywhere occur.—*P. S. B. A.*, vol. xiv. p. 37 f. Dr. Budge has quite recently published a complete edition of the text of the Theban Recension of the Book of the Dead, with Vocabulary and Translation, in three volumes.

The under-world.

The bull of A. is Osiris.

Osiris over his adversaries on the day of the weighing of the words ; I am thy kinsman, Osiris.

O ye who unclosethe the ways and open the roads to beneficent souls in the house of Osiris, unclosethe then the ways and open the roads to the soul of N. who is with you, let him enter boldly and come forth in peace at the house of Osiris, without hindrance and without repulse. Let him enter at his pleasure, and go forth at his will triumphantly with you ; and let that be executed which he shall order in the house of Osiris.

No lightness of his in the scale has been found, and the balance is relieved of his case.

It is curious that we never read of a soul being turned back from the bar of Osiris. Without exception they pass the ordeal successfully, and enter into the abode of the great king. We have indeed no information as to the fate of those, if any, who are rejected. The following is the protestation of innocence, which the dead man makes "on arriving at the Hall of Righteousness" (*P. S. B. A.*, xvii. p. 216 ff., 273 ff.):—

Here am I ; I am come to thee ; I bring to thee right and have put a stop to wrong.

I am not a doer of wrong to man.

I am not one who slayeth his kindred.

I am not one who telleth lies instead of truth.

I am not conscious of treason.

I am not a doer of mischief.

I hurt no servant with his master.

I cause no famine.  
 I cause not weeping.  
 I am not a murderer.

I reduce not the offerings in the temples.  
 I lessen not the cakes of the gods.  
 I rob not the dead of their funeral food.

I have propitiated the god with that which he loveth.  
 I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty,  
 clothes to the naked, a boat to the shipwrecked. I have  
 made oblations to the gods, and funeral offerings to the  
 departed. Deliver me therefore ; protect me therefore ;  
 and report not against me in presenee of the great god.

I am one whose mouth is pure, and whose hands are pure, to  
 whom there is said "Come, come in peace," by those  
 who look upon him.

The hundred and fifth chapter is headed  
 "Chapter whereby one propitiateth the Ka"  
 (*P. S. B. A.*, xvi. p. 270 f.) :—

Hail to thee, my Ka, my coeval.

May I come to thee and be glorified and made manifest  
 and ensouled, let me have strength and soundness.

Let me bring to thee grains of incense, wherewith I may  
 purify myself, and may also purify thine own overflow.

The wrong assertions that I have uttered, and the wrong  
 resistance which I have offered, let them not be im-  
 puted to me.

For I am the green gem, fresh at the throat of Ra, given by  
 those who are at the horizon. Their freshness is my  
 freshness, the freshness of my Ka is like theirs, and  
 the dainties of my Ka are like theirs.

Thou who liftest the hand at the balance, and raisest law to  
 the nose of Ra in this day, do not thou put my head

away from thee. For I am the eye which seeth, and the ear which heareth ; and am I not the bull of the sacrificial herd, are not the mortuary gifts upon me, and the supernal powers ?

Grant that I may pass by thee, and may purify myself, and cause the triumph of Osiris over his adversaries.

**Occupations of the Dead.** — This Book of the Dead then, and the paintings associated with its text on the walls of the tomb, are our chief, practically our only source of information on the condition and manner of life of the souls that have passed into the under-world. In these paintings the dead are represented as engaged usually in agriculture, ploughing, sowing and reaping ; sailing on a heavenly Nile, the prototype of the earthly ; making offerings to the gods ; and in other respects conducting themselves as they were wont to do in this life. It is clear therefore that the future existence was conceived of as a renewal of the present, but under more favourable conditions, and free from the accidents and disappointments that are here encountered. After death, the man begins a new life, which is a reproduction of the old, with happier auspices, and all the present liability to failure, distress, and suffering removed. In harmony with this idea, there were placed in the grave with the

mummy, articles of dress, implements of toil, of war, and of the chase, etc., which he would be likely to require in his new home.

**Superstitions.**—By the side however of this care for the dead, and the faith and worship that gathered round the tomb, are found superstitious beliefs of quite another kind, which affected rather the living. The extent and influence of these it is not easy to measure. In the life of the ordinary Egyptian omens and charms of all sorts played a large part. His magicians and astrologers determined for him lucky and unlucky days. At given times he must not go forth from his house, lest he expose himself to hurtful influences. If unfortunate enough to be born on a certain day, an early or violent death will be sure to overtake him. He provided himself with talismans, to defeat the power of the evil eye; with potent spells to keep him safe from the malice of demons; with amulets to wear on his body as preservatives from harm or sickness. If for a moment we put out of sight the higher beliefs and teaching, to which we have hitherto given our attention, the Egyptian exhibits himself to us as the victim of a mass of superstitions, defending his life by incantations from imaginary perils, and putting his trust in a childish magic, for the nearest parallel to which we must go to the negroes of Central or Western Africa. He

believes in ghosts, in evil spirits who take possession of and otherwise annoy the living; and in dreams as channels of communication with the unseen world. From a different point of view, religiously and philosophically considered, he is seen also to have formed a conception of Destiny or Fate not altogether dissimilar to that of the Greeks.

**Morality.**—If then finally the question is asked, what influence these opinions had upon the moral practice and life of the men of ancient Egypt, the same apparent contradiction will be evoked that presents itself in their creed. A lofty code of morality on the one hand, set off on the other by dark habits of superstition and cruelty. But these last, with the beliefs lightly touched upon above, are by no means peculiar to the valley of the Nile. They are shared in, to a greater or less extent, by all peoples. Even nations that have attained a comparatively high degree of civilisation do not at once shake themselves free from the bonds of a superstitious credulity; and, as students of folk-lore well know, these fancies and convictions are by no means extinct in a mild form amongst ourselves. What is peculiar to Egypt, what is unique among ancient peoples on the same scale and outside of the circle of Jewish influence, is the universal belief in the immortality

of the soul,—in a future life, the conditions of which are determined at least theoretically by righteous or unrighteous behaviour in this. If we are to pass judgement upon the nation's character and thought in the light of their literature alone, or of that portion of it which is concerned with this particular doctrine, and with man's duty as regards the life after death,—and this subject it must be remembered occupies the largest and most imposing part of that literature,—we shall award to the Egyptian a very high place, if not the highest, in the number of those who have taught and practised a lofty morality.<sup>1</sup> And although it is impossible to put out of sight the other side, which they have in common with peoples lower in the scale of civilisation; although it seems clear that with them too belief and practice declined from their early simplicity; yet on the whole a verdict must be given in their favour, as having faithfully and honestly sought to know and to walk by the truth.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the *Precepts of Ptah-Hotep*, "the most ancient book in the world," translated by Philippe Virey, in *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. iii.



# BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

LITERATURE. HISTORY.—E. A. Wallis Budge, *Babylonian Life and History*, second edition, London, 1886 ; A. H. Sayce, *Assyria: Its Princes, Priests, and People*, London, n. d. ; and *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, second edition, 1894 ; G. Maspéro, *ut supra*, p. 36 ; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Babylonia."

A convenient summary, brought up to date, of the results of inquiry into the history not only of ancient Babylonia, but of Egypt, Palestine, and other countries, will be found in *Recent Research in Bible Lands*, edited by H. V. Hilprecht, Philadelphia, 1896. Each chapter is written by a specialist in his own department.

DOCTRINE, etc.—A. H. Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, third edition, London, 1891.

## BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

**A**NTIQUITY ; Comparison with Egypt.—In the country that lies between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris, the land of Mesopotamia, there flourished empires and a civilisation, the records of which carry us back to as far distant a time as do those of Egypt herself. The earliest inscribed tablets that have been brought to light from the soil of Babylonia are interpreted by scholars as referring to events and reigns that occurred at the beginning of the fourth millennium before Christ ; and the reliable history of Egyptian kings begins at about the same period. The advantage in point of antiquity is perhaps on the side of Egypt, in that, as far as our present knowledge goes, the fully-grown civilisation with which she appears on the scene presupposes a longer period of development than need be the case in the country of Babylon.<sup>1</sup> In another respect also

<sup>1</sup> In the presence of the most recent discoveries this conjecture would appear to have less probability than formerly. Cp. Amiaud, on the tablets of Telloh, in *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. i. p. 42 ff. ; Hilprecht, *Recent Research in Bible Lands*, p. 60 f. :—"Through the abundance of the recovered

an initial parallel may be drawn. For as Egypt was the gift of the Nile, so was Mesopotamia the gift of her two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. These both take their rise in the mountains of Armenia. But the Tigris, the eastern and shorter river, after rising within a few miles of the sister stream, makes a great bend east and south-east. The Euphrates, on the contrary, with a source considerably farther north and a longer course, flows at first westwards, and then south, before turning south-east. At Baghdad the streams approach within thirty or forty miles of one another, only to separate again, leaving between them a wide level plain, the length of which from north-west by west to south-east by east is about two hundred and fifty miles, with an average breadth of seventy-five or eighty. The two rivers finally unite at Kurnah, in latitude  $31^{\circ}$  N., longitude  $47^{\circ} 30'$  E., to form the Shatt-el-Arab; and pursue their course together for some hundred miles farther, through a flat swampy plain, into the head of the Persian Gulf. The earlier part

texts of the earliest Semitic rulers . . . our conception of the power and extent of the Semitic race of about 3800 B.C. had to undergo a radical transformation"; *ib.* p. 67 f.:—"We shall not go astray, therefore, if we place the approximate age of the earliest of these kings, Urukagina, on the threshold of the fifth and fourth millenniums before Christ, or in round numbers, 4000 B.C."

of the course of both rivers is therefore through a mountainous country, which must in prehistoric times have been largely volcanic. Southward however the hills descend gradually to the great plain of Mesopotamia, broad and fertile, which may be considered to commence at about the 34th or 35th degree north latitude; but there is no clearly-defined boundary line between lowland and upland.

The whole of this level country is formed by the sediment which the rivers have brought down from the mountains of Armenia, gradually silting up the Persian Gulf, and pushing back its head farther and farther south; and the richness of the land thus reclaimed from the sea is attested by the countless remains of great and populous cities, the footprints of mighty empires, which there held successive sway. Much of the country therefore, that is now settled and inhabited, must even in early historic times have been beneath the surface of the water; while in the unrecorded ages before the beginning of history or tradition the Persian Gulf extended to the foot of the Armenian hills. Attempts have been made to estimate the time required for the deposition of the existing land, and thereby to determine a *terminus a quo* for the possible settlement of tribes and peoples in the Euphrates valley. It is calculated that at the

present time the land is encroaching southwards at the rate of a mile in about seventy years.<sup>1</sup> But in all probability the rate of advance was considerably faster in the centuries before our era, when the coastline was nearer to the hills, and the sediment had not in consequence so far to travel. In any case, no safe inference can be drawn from the progress now going on to the state of the country at any given date in primitive times.

**Earliest Inhabitants.** — The question who were the earliest inhabitants of this land of Babylonia, is one to which as yet no satisfactory answer can be given. Nor is it in the least likely that we shall ever be able fully to trace the migrations, and disentangle the races that found a common meeting-ground on the plains of the Euphrates. The ordinary view postulates a primitive population of wandering, or half-settled tribes, variously termed Accadian or Sumerian, loosely connected together, and speaking an agglutinative language belonging to the Turanian family, living somewhat after the manner of the Kurds of to-day, but in a much higher state of civilisation. According to some authorities, this people of Turanian origin were themselves immigrants, who intermingled with and partially displaced a still earlier

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Masp., *Dawn of Civilisation*, 2nd ed., p. 549 and note 1.

Semitic stock, from whom they largely borrowed their arts and their language. Others again<sup>1</sup> regard the Accadian tongue, and therefore presumably the Accadian people, as wholly mythical, the supposed language being nothing more nor less than a mystification of the priests, who employed a secret writing, a kind of cipher of their own, which only the initiated could comprehend. The very name of this shadowy race is still *sub judice*; and by some authors they are termed Accadian, by others Sumerian. While the titles Accad and Sumer, assigned at first to the southern and northern portions of Babylonia respectively, have on the latest maps and with the latest authorities changed places, so that Sumer is now found in the south of Mesopotamia, and Accad is relegated to the north.

**Coming of the Semites.**—Upon and amongst these tribes of uncertain origin came the Semites, probably from Southern Arabia, and established

<sup>1</sup> As for example, Halévy and F. Delitzsch. Cf. Maspéro, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 2nd ed., p. 550, note 5. See also the discussion of the question by Delitzsch in his *Assyrian Grammar*, § 25, English edition:—"The Semitic Babylonians will be found entirely justified when they ascribed the invention of the art of writing to their god Nebo, and that besides the Cossæans, they never anywhere make the slightest mention of a third, a Sumero-Accadian people, will in the long run be explained by the fact that such a people was never in existence."

themselves in the land of Shinar, in the south of Mesopotamia, between the two rivers, where the chief cities built or occupied by them were Babylon, Erech or Warka, Nipur, and possibly Ur of the Chaldees. The most ancient kings of Babylon of whom we read were named Eannadu and Entenna, whose reigns are ascribed to the end of the fifth millennium B.C.

**History.**—This early Babylonian kingdom appears to have been subject to pressure from two sides: the Chaldæans, on the one hand, from their ancient and famous city of Ur, now Mugheir, whose origin is wholly unknown, and even the identification of its site disputed; and the Elamite tribes from the east. These latter overran the entire country, and about the last quarter of the third millennium B.C. gained a position at Babylon, overthrowing the native kings, and in the person of Khammuragas, *c.* 2280 B.C., setting up there Kossæan or Kassite dynasties. Meanwhile the northern part of the country increased in strength, and about the year 1700 B.C. became an independent kingdom under the name of Assyria, a name derived from its chief town or god Ashur. Babylon was conquered and made tributary by Tukulti-Adar I., *c.* 1275 B.C. But the real founder of the greatness of Assyria, and of what is



called the first Assyrian empire, was Tiglath-Pileser I., a century and a half later. His successful wars carried him northwards into the mountains of Armenia, as far as Lake Van, as well as southwards into Babylonia, and westwards to Phœnicia and the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. After his death there was a brief decline in the Assyrian power. But the glory of the empire was reasserted by Ashur-nasir-pal and his son Shalmaneser II., 885–825 B.C., under the latter of whom Assyria and Israel first came into contact. The second Assyrian empire was founded by Tiglath-Pileser III., or Pul, a usurper, 745–727 B.C. (2 Kings xv. 19); under whose successors, Shalmaneser IV., Sargon, —another usurper,—Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assur-bani-pal, 668–626 B.C., the power of Assyria reached its greatest height. Nineveh was destroyed 606 B.C. by the combined forces of the Medes and Babylonians; thus making way for the new Babylonian empire established by Nabopolassar, which endured until 539 B.C., when Babylon itself was taken by Cyrus, and passed under the rule of the Persians, who in their turn were succeeded by the Greeks under Alexander the Great.

**Chronology.**—In the case of Egypt, it will be remembered that great difficulties had been

experienced in determining with any approach to accuracy the chronology and succession of the various dynasties that held sway in the land. It is in fact only quite recently that these questions of date have been placed upon a satisfactory and reliable basis. The Egyptian scribes appear to have been as destitute of any sense of perspective in time, as for instance the ancient or modern Hindus. It was quite otherwise however with the peoples of Babylonia and Assyria. From the beginning of the ninth century before Christ to the middle of the seventh, we possess in the so-called *Assyrian Eponym Canon* a complete system of chronology, in which the chief events are dated with precision from year to year. As was the case with the consuls at Rome, an officer was appointed annually, who gave his name to the year in which he held office. And it was usual for the king himself to become the eponym, or in Assyrian *limmu*, in the first or second year of his reign. Lists of these eponyms were drawn up and kept, and have come down to us, although in an incomplete form. Sufficient however has been preserved to enable us to compile an unbroken table of the chronology within the limits indicated,—years which include the most important part of Assyrian history.

There is evidence also that at one time similar lists were in existence, reaching back to a much greater antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Between the dates and reigns of the Assyrian kings thus determined, and the dates given in the Hebrew records of the Old Testament, considerable discrepancies exist,—discrepancies too serious to admit of being explained away or reconciled. The writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles evidently followed a different system of chronology from that of the Assyrian tables; while the detailed precision of the latter, and their contemporary character, render it hardly probable that they should be to any great extent in error. Almost the only date of importance in which the two systems agree is that of the year of the fall of Samaria, which both place in 722 B.C. Most scholars therefore recognise that it is necessary to revise the dates of events and reigns given in the Old Testament for the kings of Israel and Judah in the light of Assyrian discovery and research.

**Cuneiform Records.**—The story of the recovery and interpretation of these records is a historical and literary romance, to which a parallel can

<sup>1</sup> See *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. i. p. 10 ff. ; Schröder, *Cun. Inscr. and the Old Testament*, English trans., vol. ii. p. 161 ff. ; George Smith, *Assyrian Eponym Canon*.

hardly be found. Here it must suffice to say that at the beginning of the present century absolutely nothing was known of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires and peoples beyond what is recorded in the scanty notices of the Bible, and of Greek classical writers. There is now in our possession a vast literature in their own language, far greater than is contained in the entire volume of Hebrew writings extant, and the larger part of which is still unpublished; but the key to its interpretation has been supplied by the insight and unwearied labours of a few scholars. This literature is historical, religious, and scientific; and is found inscribed on tablets of clay in the great libraries that have been dug up from the ruined mounds and sites of Mesopotamia. In this labour of exploration and decipherment, Englishmen such as Sir H. Rawlinson, Sir A. H. Layard, George Smith, and others now living have borne an honourable and effective part. But the work is still comparatively in its infancy. Fifty years hence the history, political social and religious, of Babylonia and Assyria will be written with a fulness and certainty of detail that is as yet unattainable.

The character inscribed on these tablets and monuments is wholly unlike that found in any

other part of the world. It consists of a wedge-like stroke, which may be described as a narrow elongated triangle, impressed upon the clay with a mallet or style. Various combinations of these wedges, upright horizontal or slanting, are associated to form each character; which then stands, not for a single letter, but for a syllable or syllables. A given character, moreover, may not only be made to serve for more syllables than one, but it may frequently be employed also as an ideogram,—intended therefore to convey some idea and to represent some word, to the true pronunciation of which its form, as presented to the eye, affords no clue.<sup>1</sup> The writing therefore is syllabic and ideographic, not alphabetic. And there has been given to it the name of arrow-headed, cuneiform, or wedge-shaped, from the character employed.

Who were the inventors of this extremely cumbersome and inconvenient mode of writing it is impossible to say; and the question is still debated between opposite schools of experts.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the intrusion of Semitic words into the Pahlavî, written and spelt according to Semitic rules, but in practice receiving the pronunciation of their Persian equivalents. (See Haug, *Essay on the Pahlavî Language*; West, *S. B. E.*, vol. v. p. xi. ff.). The same explanation is probably to be given of the apparent different values of one and the same sign in Assyrian (Haug, *l.c.*, p. 121 f.).

It would seem probable that the character was at first linear, and that the wedge shape was developed with the introduction of clay as a writing material. In a few of the ideograms also it is still possible to trace a resemblance to the object denoted by the sign; showing that the characters were originally in part at least hieroglyphic. The greater number of scholars assign their origin to an early Turanian race, the so-called Accadians or Sumerians, from whom the later Semites borrowed the signs, adapting them to the forms and necessities of their own language. Others, denying the existence of sufficient evidence for any Accadian language or people at all, hold that some branch of the Semitic family were themselves the inventors for their own purposes of the cuneiform script. If that be so, they certainly invented a peculiarly difficult and unsuitable mode of writing. However that may be, the wedge-shaped signs, once established, were employed for several languages, differing widely in their nature both as to grammar and vocabulary. Of these the most prevalent, and to us most interesting because of its intimate connection with Hebrew, is the Babylonian or Assyrian, the closely-related languages of the great empires of Mesopotamia. Between them merely dialectic

differences exist ; and they are both more nearly akin to Hebrew, and therefore throw more light on its origin and structure, and especially its vocabulary, than any other language that is known.

**Literature.**—The literary works that have been recovered from the ruined temples and palaces of Babylonia, and which are all thus written on imperishable clay, may be conveniently described as belonging to three classes, historical, scientific, and religious ; but to each of these we must be prepared to give a somewhat wide interpretation. The historical literature mounts up into the region of legend and fable. The scientific includes much that we should prefer to denominate empiricism and magic. The religious embraces all that has to do with man's relations to, and worship of supernatural powers. Neither are these three classes separated by any hard and fast lines ; so that it is often impossible to say, for instance, where science ends and sorcery begins ; or to distinguish between the latter and a true instinct of religion, working on a low scale.

**Contrast between Babylonian and Assyrian.**—The Babylonians appear to have been a people of an essentially pacific and reverent nature, devoting their time and energy to literary pursuits and the cultivation of science and art.

The Assyrians, on the other hand, until a comparatively late period of their empire, did not busy themselves with the making of books. They were content to borrow from their neighbours, without apparently assimilating the great mass of written knowledge with which they stocked their libraries. To them belonged a nature and character rougher and more warlike; and they have been often and aptly termed the Romans of Asia, campaigning far and wide, and building up by force a great empire in which the arts of peace held only a secondary place. The few really original works of theirs, which have been preserved to us, are bare chronological and historical annals; nor is it until we come to the reign of Assur-bani-pal, 668–626 B.C., that we find any apparent interest in, or application to literature. The immense development that took place in every direction under this Assyrian king was not less manifest in literary zeal and production than in more active pursuits. It was however entirely otherwise at Babylon and with the Babylonian nation. There, from the earliest times with which we are acquainted, literature and science were cultivated, and pressed into the service of religion and daily life. Here, too, we are confronted with the question whether these arts and acquirements were entirely or in



large part of native growth, or whether they were imported from without. The Assyrians unquestionably borrowed and adapted, while themselves producing little. Were the men of Babylon, their predecessors and teachers, indebted in their turn to a foreign race for most of what they knew? This is a matter still under debate, whether or to what extent their great literature was really indigenous, the product of the Semitic mind working in and by itself, or whether, with much beside, it was derived from an earlier Accadian civilisation. The question is largely academic, and for the purposes of the study of comparative religion may be put on one side. If the culture and literary possessions of the Babylonians were wholly or to a great extent of foreign origin, they were at least received before the dawn of history; and to disentangle the native threads from the primitive web into which they have been woven is a task altogether beyond our power. For all practical purposes their religion may be treated as though of simple and unmixed origin.

**Historical.**—One of the most interesting, if not the earliest document illustrative of Babylonian mythology and belief, is the so-called Epic of the Creation, an account of the creation of the universe, which bears, as is well known, a remark-

able resemblance to the history given in the first chapter of Genesis. The poem, which has come down to us in three forms or versions, all of them fragmentary, consisted originally in all probability of seven tablets or books, of some of which the whole, and of others large parts are now missing. The principal tablets have been found in the ruins of the royal library of Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh. And although in their present form the legends are judged to be little, if at all, earlier than his time, they embody elements of a much greater age. The second version is contained in two tablets brought from the same spot, and differs considerably in detail and arrangement. The scribe of these tablets records that he copied from older documents belonging to Cutha in Babylonia; to this account therefore the name Cuthæan or Babylonian has sometimes been applied. Fragments of a third, a bi-lingual narrative, have been discovered at Sippara; and are believed to be older than the other two.

The first tablet is introductory, describing the condition of the universe when only *Tiamat* or Chaos (Heb. תְּהוֹם, "deep," Gen. i. 2) existed; and when out of chaos were produced the primeval gods of the sky and the ocean. The second tablet has been lost. But the third and fourth

give an account of the great war waged between the powers of light and of darkness, represented by the gods of heaven and their allies on the one hand, and on the other by Tiamat with her monstrous offspring. The champion of the gods is Merodach. And the conflict ends in the overthrow and the destruction of Tiamat, the establishment of light and order in the universe, and the spreading out of the heavens. In the fifth tablet the heavenly bodies are made, the sun moon stars and the signs of the zodiac. The sixth tablet is missing. While the seventh tells of the creation of beasts, cattle, and creeping things.<sup>1</sup>

At that time the heaven above had not yet announced,  
or the earth beneath recorded a name ;  
the unopened deep was their generator,  
Mummu-Tiamat (the chaos of the sea) was the mother of them  
all.

Their waters were embosomed as one, and  
the corn-field was unharvested, the pasture was ungrown.  
At that time the gods had not appeared, any of them ;  
by no name were they recorded, no destiny (had they fixed).  
Then the (great) gods were created,  
Lakhmu and Lakhamu issued forth (the first),  
until they grew up (when)  
Ansar and Kisar were created.

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<sup>1</sup> *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. i. pp. 122 ff., 147 ff. ; vol. vi. p. 107 ff. ; George Smith, *Chaldean Account of Genesis* ; Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, vi.

Long were the days, extended (was the time, until)  
 the gods Anu (Bel and Ea were born).  
 Ansar and Kisar (gave them birth).

“O Merodach, thou art he who avengest us ;  
 we give thee the sovereignty, (we) the hosts of all the uni-  
 verse.

Thou possessest (it), and in the assembly (of the gods)  
 mayest thou exalt thy word !  
 Never may thy weapons be broken ; may thine enemies  
 tremble !

O lord, be gracious to the soul of him who putteth his trust  
 in thee,  
 and destroy the soul of the god who has hold of evil.”

They (the gods) rejoiced, they approached Merodach the king.  
 They bestowed upon him the sceptre, throne, and reign ;  
 they gave him a weapon unsurpassed, consuming the hostile.  
 “Go” (they said) “and cut off the life of Tiamat ;  
 let the winds carry her blood to secret places.”

“(Against) the gods my fathersthou hast directed thy hostility.  
 Thou harnesser of thy companions, may thy weapons reach  
 their bodies !

Stand up, and I and thou will fight together.”

When Tiamat heard this,  
 she uttered her former spells, she repeated her command.  
 Tiamat also cried out vehemently with a loud voice.  
 From its roots she strengthened (her) seat completely.  
 She recites an incantation, she casts a spell,  
 and the gods of battle demand for themselves their arms.  
 Then Tiamat attacked Merodach the chief prophet of the gods ;  
 in combat they joined ; they met in battle ;  
 and the lord outspread his snare (and) enclosed her.

He bound her, and ended her life.

He threw down her corpse ; he stood upon it.

When Tiamat who marched before (them) was conquered,  
he dispersed her forces, her host was overthrown,  
and the gods her allies who marched beside her  
trembled (and) feared (and) turned their backs.

. . . . .

He prepared the twin mansions of the great gods.

He fixed the stars, even the twin-stars, to correspond with them.

He ordained the year, appointing the signs of the zodiac over  
(it).

For each of the twelve months he fixed three stars,  
from the day when the year issues forth to its close.

He founded the mansion of the (Sun-god), the god of the  
ferry-boat, that they might know their bonds,  
that they might not err, that they might not go astray in  
any way.

. . . . .

He illuminated the Moon-god, that he might be porter of  
the night,

and ordained for him the ending of the night that the day  
may be known,

(saying), "Month by month, without break, keep watch in  
thy disk.

At the beginning of the month light up the night,  
announcing thy horns that the heaven may know."

. . . . .

At that time the gods in their assembly created (the beasts).

They made perfect the mighty (monsters).

They caused the living creatures to come forth,

the cattle of the field, (the wild beasts) of the field, and  
the creeping things.

(They fixed their habitations) for the living creatures (of  
the field).

They distributed (in their dwelling-places) the cattle and creeping things of the city.

(They made strong) the multitude of creeping things, all the off-spring (of the earth).

A. H. SAYCE, in *Records of the Past*.

A larger epic poem than even that of the Creation narrates in twelve books the adventures of the solar hero *Gilgames*,<sup>1</sup> who travelled far and wide, even to the land of the dead, in search of the plant of eternal youth. Gilgames is supposed by many to be the same as Nimrod. Each division of the book corresponds to a sign of the zodiac. The eleventh contains the Babylonian story of the Deluge, as related to Gilgames by his ancestor *Shamashnapishtim*,<sup>2</sup> the Chaldæan Noah, who was saved from the waters by the favour of the gods.

Let me reveal unto thee, Gilgames, the story of my preservation, and the oracle of the gods let me tell to thee. . . . (Ea commanded me) "Build the ship, save what thou canst of the germ of life. The gods will destroy the seed of life, but do thou live, and bid the seed of life of every kind mount into the midst of the ship. . . . (Then) enter the door of the ship, and bring into the midst of it thy corn, thy property, and thy goods, thy (family), thy household, thy concubines, and the sons of the

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly read *Izdubar* or *Gisdhubar*. Cp. Sayce, Hibbert Lecture, p. 8, and note; but see Maspéro, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 2nd ed., p. 574, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Sun of life," otherwise read *Khasisadra*. Cp. Schröder, *Cuneiform Inscr. and the Old Testament*, Eng. trans., vol. i. p. 56; Maspéro, *Dawn of Civilisation*, p. 566, note 3.

people. The cattle of the field, the wild beasts of the field, as many as I would preserve, I will send unto thee, and they shall keep thy door." . . . Six days and nights the wind, the flood, and the storm go on overwhelming. The seventh day when it approached the storm subsided; the flood, which had fought against (men) like an armed host, was quieted. The sea began to dry, and the wind and the flood ended. I (Shamashnapishtim) watched the sea making a noise, and the whole of mankind was turned to clay; like reeds the corpses floated. I opened the window, and the light smote upon my face; I stooped and sat down; I weep; over my face flow my tears. I watch the regions at the edge of the sea; a district rose twelve measures high. To the land of Nizir steered the ship; in the mountain of Nizir stopped the ship, and it was not able to pass over it. The first day, the second day, the mountain of Nizir stopped the ship. The third day, the fourth day, the mountain of Nizir stopped the ship. The fifth day, the sixth day, the mountain of Nizir stopped the ship. The seventh day when it approached I sent forth a dove, and it left. The dove went and returned, and found no resting-place, and it came back. Then I sent forth a swallow, and it left. The swallow went and returned, and found no resting-place, and it came back. I sent forth a raven, and it left. The raven went and saw the carrion on the water, and it ate, it swam, it wandered away; it did not return. I sent (the animals) forth to the four winds, I sacrificed a sacrifice. I built an altar on the peak of the mountain. I set vessels (each containing the third of an ephah) by sevens; underneath them I spread reeds, pine-wood, and spices. The gods smelt the savour; the gods smelt the good savour; the gods gathered like flies over the sacrifices. Thereupon the great goddess at her approach lighted up the rainbow, which Anu had created according to his glory. The crystal brilliance of those gods before me may I not forget.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The translation is that of Professor A. H. Sayce, in *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, p. 28 ff. Cp. George Smith, *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, ch. xvi.

**Scientific.**—Of the scientific literature little need be here said. It is in large part astrological, devoting itself to the observation of the heavenly bodies in order to measure and foretell the destinies of men. Babylonian mathematics and astronomy were indeed justly famous among the nations of antiquity; but these sciences appear to have been cultivated not so much for their own sake, or for any pure love of the truth, as for the purpose of omens and the forecasting of future events. In this respect they were only treading in the steps which all other peoples of the old world followed. Numbers and the stars were universally believed to exercise a decisive influence, malign or otherwise, on human fortunes. The superiority of the Babylonians consisted in this, that by the side of much which was merely childish and superstitious, they had attained in many particulars to a correct knowledge of arithmetical rules, and of the laws governing the motions of the heavenly bodies.

**Religious.**—That department of the literature which we have classed as religious,—using the word again in its broadest sense, to cover all that has to do with the worship of supernatural powers, whether in the purest or most debased form,—is both relatively and in actual bulk



the largest and most important of the three. In this respect also there would appear to have been a wide difference in mental and spiritual disposition between the men of Babylon and of Assyria. The Babylonians were essentially a meditative and religious people, pondering much upon the gods and their relations to men, raising magnificent temples for their worship, and composing hymns in their honour, which often by their tenderness and pathos recall the Hebrew psalms. The Assyrian was energetic and practical, caring for his gods only in so far as they were able, or believed to be able, to render him help in war. On his soil the temple was always subordinate to the palace. And his inscriptions proclaimed not so much the glory of the god, as the greatness of the king. It is to Babylon therefore and to her books that we must turn, in order to gain some conception of the religious life and beliefs prevailing among the great nations, who thought and worshipped and strove on the plains of Mesopotamia for many centuries before the birth of Christ.

**Subdivisions.**—The religious writings proper may be subdivided into two, or perhaps more correctly into three classes, which will correspond roughly with a chronological development of religious idea and thought.

**Spirit Belief.**—The lowest and most primitive class is represented by a large and increasing collection of magical incantations, of spells and exorcisms, presupposing a widespread and influential belief in spirits and magic, with a corresponding ritual or body of ceremonies, controlled and regulated by the exorcist priests or medicine-men. These alone were acquainted with the occult powers of the spirits innumerable, who thronged the earth, the air, and the water; and alone were able to influence them for good or evil, to avert the consequences of their malice, or to ensure their favour and goodwill. This spirit-belief, a kind of demonolatry, with its attendant priest-craft,—a condition indeed not far removed from simple fetichism,—is the first and earliest stage that is revealed to us in the religious literature of Babylonia.

The evil (hostile god), the evil demon,  
 the demon of the field, the demon of the mountain,  
 the demon of the sea, the demon of the tomb,  
 the evil spirit, the dazzling fiend,  
 the evil wind, the assaulting wind,  
 which strips off the clothing of the body as an evil demon,  
 conjure, O spirit of heaven ! conjure, O spirit of earth !  
 The (possessing) demon which seizes a man, the demon  
     which seizes a man,  
 the (seizing) demon which works mischief, the evil demon,  
 conjure, O spirit of heaven ! conjure, O spirit of earth !

That which is misformed, that which is unlucky,  
 that which is racked, even a diseased muscle,  
 a constricted muscle, a swollen muscle, an aching muscle,  
 a painful muscle,  
 conjure, O spirit of heaven ! conjure, O spirit of earth !

. . . . .

Seven are they, seven are they,  
 in the hollow of the deep, seven they are ;  
 gleams of the sky are those seven.  
 In the hollow of the deep, in a palace, they grew up.  
 Male they are not, female they are not.  
 They are whirlwind-like ghosts ; travellers are they.  
 Wife they possess not, child they beget not.  
 Compassion and kindness know they not.  
 Prayer and supplication hear they not.  
 Horses which are bred in the mountains are they.  
 Unto Ea are they hostile.  
 The throne-bearers of the gods are they.  
 To trouble the canal in the street are they set.  
 Evil are they, evil are they !  
 Seven are they, seven are they, seven twice again are they !  
 O spirit of heaven, conjure ! O spirit of earth, conjure !<sup>1</sup>

**Hymns and Prayers.**—The second subdivision of the religious compositions consists of hymns and prayers to the gods, of which a large number have been preserved. To this collection is given not inaptly the name of the Chaldæan Rig - Veda ; and between these writings and invocations belonging to the first class no very strictor definite line can be drawn. The two categories overlap, and shade off into

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, 3rd ed., pp. 441 f., 457 f.

one another. Generally speaking, however, the hymns and prayers addressed to the greater gods breathe a loftier spirit, and move on a higher plane of feeling and thought. The Babylonian or Assyrian, who addressed his patron deity, or the patron deity of his nation, if he did not conceive of him for the moment as the absolute supreme (*henotheism*), yet regarded him as in grandeur and might exalted to an immeasurable height above men,—therefore not merely a source of possible injury or harm, but in some instances certainly a capable and beneficent dispenser of good. Illustrations are not far to seek.

O lord, who liftest up the torch, who pursuest swiftly the  
foe,

who carriest away the land of the disobedient, may thy  
heart be exalted !

Thou who destroyest the life of the evil one, may thy heart  
be exalted !

Thou who rainest fire and stones upon the enemy, may thy  
heart be exalted !<sup>1</sup>

O Sun-god, on the horizon of heaven thou dawnest !

The pure bolts of heaven thou openest !

The doors of heaven thou openest !

O Sun-god, thou liftest up thy head to the world !

O Sun-god, thou coverest the earth with the bright  
firmament of heaven !

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<sup>1</sup> Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 483.

Thou settest the ear to (the prayers) of mankind ;  
 thou plantest the foot of mankind . . .  
 The cattle of the god (Ner<sup>1</sup> thou enlightenest).<sup>2</sup>

(O king) of the land, lord of the world !  
 (O king), first-born of Ea, powerful (over) heaven and earth !  
 . . . mighty lord of mankind, king of the world, god of  
       gods !

(Prince) of heaven and earth, who has no rival !  
 The companion of Anu and Mul-lil !  
 The merciful one among the gods !  
 The merciful one who loveth to give life to the dead !  
 Merodach, king of heaven and earth !  
 King of Babylon, lord of E-Saggil !<sup>3</sup>  
 King of E-Zida, lord of E-makh-tila ("the supreme house of  
       life") !

Heaven and earth are thine !  
 All round heaven and earth is thine !  
 The spell that giveth life is thine !  
 The breath that giveth life is thine !  
 The holy writing of the mouth of the deep is thine !  
 Mankind, even the black-headed race,  
 the living creatures as many as pronounce a name and exist  
       in the earth,  
 the four zones, all that there are,  
 the angels of the hosts of heaven and earth, whatever be  
       their number,  
 (all worship) thee, and (lend to thee their) ears.<sup>4</sup>

Bowing down in his sanctuary, Assur-bani-pal made his  
 prayer to Nebo his lord :—

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* Nergal, the god of the dead, *infra*, p. 112 f.

<sup>2</sup> Sayce, Hilbert Lectures, p. 491.

<sup>3</sup> The great temple of Merodach at Babylon ; E-Zida was  
 the name of the temple of Nebo at Borsippa.

<sup>4</sup> Sayce, Hilbert Lectures, p. 501 f.

I have given myself unto thee, Nebo, thou wilt not forsake me, (even) me ;

My life in thy presence is governed, my soul is held in the embrace of Beltis ;

I have given myself unto thee, Nebo, (thou) mighty one, thou wilt not forsake me, even me, in the midst of my sins.

There answered a breath from the presence of Nebo his lord :—

Fear not, Assur-bani-pal, long life will I give unto thee ;

Fair winds from thy life will I appoint ;

My mouth speaking that which is good shall cause thy prayer to be heard in the assembly of the great gods. <sup>1</sup>

**Penitential Psalms.**—Finally there have come down to us religious compositions, which in spiritual tone and thought mark an advance upon the hymns themselves, in that they appear to add to the sense of the overwhelming majesty and greatness of the gods, so conspicuous in these, a consciousness of personal guilt and condemnation, which in ancient literature finds its nearest parallel in the Hebrew Psalter. To these therefore has been given the name of “penitential psalms.” Yet in the examples met with there will be noticed, as would naturally be expected, great inequality of thought and treatment. Some descend to a level little removed from that of magical incantations. In others is manifest a spirit of true sincerity and contrition for sin. Nor, again, is it easy always to draw a clear line of distinction between the

<sup>1</sup> *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. vi. p. 105.

penitential psalms and the preceding class of hymns and prayers. They join hands with one another; and examples are readily found illustrating the spirit and characteristics of the two forms united in one. The prayers to the gods bespeak the need and penitence of him who prays. And the penitential psalms are true prayers for forgiveness and mercy.

Lord, my sins are many, great are my misdeeds !  
O my god, my sins are many, great my misdeeds !  
O my goddess, my sins are many, great my misdeeds !  
I have committed faults, and I knew them not ;  
I have committed sin, and I knew it not ;  
I have fed upon misdeeds, and I knew them not ;  
I have walked in omissions, and I knew them not.  
The lord, in the anger of his heart, he has stricken me ;  
The god, in the wrath of his heart, has abandoned me ;  
Ishtar is enraged against me, and has treated me harshly.  
I make an effort, and no one offers me a hand,  
I weep, and no one comes to me ;  
I cry aloud, and no one hears me.  
I sink under affliction, I am overwhelmed, I can no longer  
raise up my head.  
I turn to my merciful god to call upon him, and I groan.

Lord, reject not thy servant ;  
And if he is hurled into the roaring waters, stretch to him  
thy hand.  
The sins I have committed, have mercy upon them ;  
The misdeeds I have committed, scatter them to the winds ;  
And my numerous faults, tear them to pieces like a garment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maspéro, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 2nd ed., p. 682.

“In lamentation is he seated,  
In cries of anguish (and) trouble of heart,  
In evil weeping, in evil lamentation.  
Like doves does he mourn bitterly night and day.  
To his merciful god like a heifer he roars ;  
Painful lamentation does he raise.  
Before his god he prostrates his face in prayer.  
He weeps, he has drawn near, he holds not back.”  
“Let me declare my doing, my doing which cannot be  
declared.  
Let me repeat my word, my word which cannot be repeated.  
O my god, let me declare my doing, my doing which cannot  
be declared.”<sup>1</sup>

**Triads of Gods.**—From a very early period, as far back indeed as the records and monuments carry us, the gods of Babylonia are found grouped in triads, or sets of three, who share between themselves according to a fixed and determined order the government of the universe. The earliest known of these triads consists of Anu, Bel, and Ea, the supreme divinities of the heaven, the earth, and the waters. They are therefore “elemental” gods ; who personify man’s most primitive conceptions of grandeur and immensity.

**Local Gods.**—All deities further were originally local, objects of reverence in a particular district or city, but without recognition or authority beyond. It followed that, as was seen to be

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, 3rd ed., p. 526.



the case in Egypt, the city which won a position of primacy amongst allied, or of supremacy over subject cities or nations, imposed on them its patron god. Thus the worship of a local deity extended with the fame of the city, which was the centre and home of its cult. Anu, Bel, and Ea were the local gods respectively of Erech (Uruk, Warka), Nipur (Nuffar), and Eridu, the most ancient cities of the plains of Babylonia.

**Anu.**—*Anu*, or *Ana*, was the god of the sky, who at Erech was worshipped as the creator of the visible universe. In later times there came to be assigned to him a more spiritual character, and he was regarded as the lord of the highest heaven, dwelling in undisturbed repose on the serene heights, above all the turmoil of earth and of the lower regions of the sky. To him, as apparently to nearly all deities originated or adopted by a Semitic people, was given a wife Anat, whose name is merely a feminine form of Anu, and who possessed no real existence or attributes apart from her lord. Afterwards Anat was looked upon as symbolizing the earth; and the union of the two deities, according to the common mythological conception, betokened the marriage of heaven and earth. The name Anat, or Anath, occurs in the Old Testament in the designation of the town Beth-Anath (בֵּית־אַנָּת).

עַנַּן, Josh. xix. 38), and also probably Anathoth (אַנַּתוֹת, Josh. xxi. 18, Isa. x. 30, Jer. i. 1). Anu was the most abstract, as he was the most exalted and mysterious of the Babylonian gods.

Bel.—*Bel*, or *Baal*, was the supreme local divinity of Nipur, the city lying in the centre of the plain of Babylonia, north by west from Erech. He held second place in the triad, originally merely because his city stood next in estimation and rank to the chief. The name Bel simply means "lord"; and there were many Bels, with the most widely-known of whom, Bel-Merodach of Babylon, this more ancient Bel was subsequently confused or identified. The god of Nipur was also known as *Mul-lil*, the lord of the under-world. In that capacity he sought to compass the destruction of mankind by the Deluge; and was punished by receiving no invitation to the sacrifice offered to the gods by the Chaldaean Noah in gratitude for his deliverance. As the second member however of the supreme triad, he held sway over the earth beneath, as Anu over the heaven above. His wife was Beltis, who like Anat had no life or authority apart from her husband.

Ea.—The nature of the third member of this primitive triad would appear to have been from the beginning that of a water-god, deity of

the ocean and rivers. *Ea* was the lord of Eridu now Abu-Shahrein, the ancient city standing then at the head of the Persian Gulf, with its seafaring population. His worship is connected with early totemistic conceptions; and he is represented on the monuments as a man, either with the lower part of the body terminating in a fish's tail, or with the skin of a fish thrown over his shoulders. But *Ea* was also the source of all wisdom, and appears as the instructor of man in knowledge and the arts. According to the tradition preserved by Berosus, he arose out of the waters of the Persian Gulf, under which he again retired every night, spending the day in teaching mankind geometry, agriculture, and all useful acquirements.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> In the first year there appeared from out of the Erythræan sea, in the region that borders upon Babylonia, a creature endowed with reason, by name Oannes, as also Apollodorus related. His whole body was that of a fish, and under the fish's head he had another head, with feet also similar to those of a man, that grew out of the fish's tail. His voice too was that of a man; and a representation of him is preserved even to this day. This being was accustomed to pass the day among men, but took no food at that season; and he gave them an insight into letters and sciences and arts of every kind. He taught them to build cities, to found temples, to compile laws, and instructed them in geometry. He showed them the seeds of the earth, and how to collect the fruits; in short, he communicated to them all that could tend to the refinement of life. . . . Now when the sun had set, this being Oannes used to retire again into the sea,

name Ea is said to mean "house," a signification not easily explained by the attributes ascribed to him. This difficulty and the character of the legends concerning him have led some to believe that we have preserved to us here a very early tradition, founded on the arrival by sea of a more highly-civilised race, who imposed their culture, and perhaps rule, on the primitive inhabitants of Babylonia. The fish form attributed to Ea would seem to stand in the way of this explanation.

As to Anu and Bel, so to Ea was assigned a wife Dav-kina or Dam-kina, "the lady of the earth." While however Anat and Beltis were little more than grammatical expressions, Dav-kina held a more independent position, and received personal homage. In her marriage with Ea was symbolized the union of the earth with the waters.

**Sin.**—A second and subordinate triad, which never attained to the same position of dignity or acceptance as the first, important as were its individual members, consisted of Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar. *Sin* was the moon-god, the son, according to the legend, of Mul-lil or Bel of

and pass the nights in the deep, for he was amphibious. . . . Moreover, Oannes wrote concerning the generations of mankind, and their institutions, and communicated this report to men. Berosus, *Rerum Chald.*, lib. i.

Nipur; himself the supreme deity of Ur, the modern Mugheir,<sup>1</sup> and owing his primacy over Shamash and Ishtar to the superior greatness and dignity of the city of which he was the patron. In the judgement of some authorities the moon-god took precedence of the sun-god Shamash because of his importance as the measurer of time. The sun-god was in fact said to be the offspring of Sin, the lord of the night, inasmuch as it was from the night that he came forth in the morning. In Babylonia Sin was not only the father of Shamash, but of Ishtar, and of all the gods. At Charran also there existed a great temple of the moon-god; a fact which may indicate the original derivation of this city from Ur. Sin is depicted on the monuments in human form, but with a crescent moon resting upon his head, or placed close beside his figure.

**Shamash.**—*Shamash* was the sun-god, Heb. שֶׁשׁ, the full orb of the sun in all his plenitude of power, and with all his attributes. Since however every city had its sun-god, this Shamash of the secondary triad must originally have been the tutelary deity of some city near to Ur, perhaps Ellasar or Larsa. Other sun-gods,

<sup>1</sup> According to other writers, Ur is to be identified with Urfa, or Orfah, in northern Mesopotamia,

notably he of Sippara, perhaps the same as Sepharvaim (סְפַרְוַיִּם, Isa. xxxvi. 19, xxxvii. 13), were more famed in later times. Shamash moreover was the giver unto men not only of light, but of justice and truth.

**Ishtar.**—*Ishtar*, of the city of Dilbat, the site of which is unknown, was the evening star, afterwards modified or transformed into the goddess of love; who combined in herself various offices and qualities, not easy to be reconciled. Thus for example she presided over the gentler affections, but was at the same time a kind of Babylonian Artemis, who delighted in the chase and in slaughter. It has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that in her case the goddesses of the morning and evening stars, originally distinct and with distinct characteristics, have become blended together, the attributes of each being attached to the one person. It would appear also that in her were absorbed or amalgamated other and lesser divinities; and she figures as an earth-goddess in the legend of her descent into Hades, to bring back her lost lover Tammûz (תַּמְּזוּז, Ezek. viii. 14). This Tammûz himself, as the son of Ea, belongs to the city of Eridu, and is another of the numerous sun-gods of Babylonia, repre-

<sup>1</sup> Maspéro, *Dawn of Civilisation*, p. 670.

senting perhaps especially the sun of the spring-tide, as he emerges fresh and beautiful from the cold grasp of winter, only to succumb in his turn before the scorching blasts of the summer heat. The origin of the name Ishtar is unknown. The *primâ facie* derivation, to be distrusted perhaps because of its very obviousness, connects it with the same root as the Persian *stâra*, a star, and with the Hebrew אִשְׁתָּר. Professor Sayce thinks that the word was probably borrowed by the Semites from an alien people. In the Old Testament, and in Greek legend, it appears as Ashtoreth (אִשְׁתָּרֶת, 1 Kings xi. 5, 33; 2 Kings xxiii. 13; and plur. אִשְׁתָּרוֹת, 1 Sam. vii. 3, 4, xii. 10, *al.*), and Ἀστάρτη. On the monuments Ishtar is depicted as a warrior goddess; and she possesses altogether a more independent character than is usual with the feminine deities of Babylonia,—a fact which is brought forward in favour of ascribing to her a non-Semitic origin.

**Rammân.**—As a member of this triad, Ishtar was early superseded by *Rammân*, the god of the tempest and the thunder; and then took her place by the side of the other planets. The precise order of the names in the triad thus reconstituted varies, the prominent aspect and power of Rammân bringing him sometimes even into the first position. As would naturally

be expected also in a god of the air and the winds, he is represented in a twofold character, as beneficent or terrible. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament Rammân appears as Rimmon (רִמּוֹן, 2 Kings v. 18), perhaps by a mere confusion with the word for "pomegranate"; and he is identified with the Syrian sun-god Hadad (הַדַּד; cf. הַדַּד־עַוְוָה, 2 Sam. viii. 3, 5; הַדַּד־רִמּוֹן, Zech. xii. 11).

**Origin of Triads.**—It does not appear that this arrangement by triads corresponded to any definite religious conception or belief in the Babylonian mind. In its origin it seems to have been more political than religious, the association of towns together for mutual support or defence giving rise to an association of their gods in a common worship. When once the usage had been established, analogy led to the creation of similar triads in other parts of the country. There is found, for example, the triad of Ea, Marduk, and Nusku; the last-named being identified with the fire-god, originally the god of the dawn, later the god of the mid-day sun, the sun in the zenith. Some however of the Babylonian gods were never, as far as we know, brought into connection with others in this manner. The triads of Babylon therefore differed altogether in character from those of Egypt; where, it will be remembered, a definite



and unalterable family relationship, that of father mother and son, always existed between the members. The internal connection at Babylon was altogether less strict, more consciously the fruit of an external necessity or convenience.

**Marduk.**—The only deity who can be said to have attained to anything like a national character was the great sun-god of Babylon, *Marduk* or *Merodach*. The origin and meaning of his name are alike uncertain; but he was early identified with the more ancient lord of Nipur, and became known as Bel-Merodach. When Babylon rose to the position of capital and mistress of the whole country, it was only natural that Merodach also should become supreme over the gods of all the cities of the land. But the Babylonians themselves never looked upon him as lord of other nations than their own. It was only by subjugating them and their gods in war, or by more peaceful means, that they were brought under his rule. The conception of a god of the whole earth, so familiar to the Hebrew prophets, was as little realised in Merodach as in any of the lesser and local divinities. He himself was the son of Ea, and figures as the great warrior and champion of the gods in the conflict with

Tiamat; and as of the gods, so of his people he is ever the powerful divine protector. At Babylon a magnificent temple was built in his honour, called *Ê-Sagila* or *Ê-Saggil*, the "house of the raising of the head," which is thus described by Herodotus<sup>1</sup>:—

In the other part of the city was the sacred precinct of Zeus Belus with brazen gates, which remained unto my time, two furlongs square. In the middle of the precinct there was built a solid tower, a furlong in length and breadth, upon which stood a second tower, upon this again a third, up to eight towers. And access was gained to them on the outside by a path that wound round all the towers. About the middle of the ascent is a landing and seats on which to rest, whereon those who make the ascent sit and rest. And on the last tower stands a great temple, in which is a large couch, richly bedecked, with a golden table at its side. But no image of any kind has been erected there. . . . And there is also within the same precinct at Babylon a second temple below, in which is seated a great golden image of Zeus of great size; and by it is set a golden table, and its pedestal and throne are of gold. According to the assertions of the Chaldæans, the weight of the gold was eight hundred talents. Outside again of the temple is a golden altar. There is also a second great altar, where full-grown sheep are sacrificed; for upon the golden altar none but sucklings may be offered. Upon the larger altar also burn a thousand talents' weight of frankincense year by year, when they keep the sacred feast to this god. And there still existed beside, within this enclosure, at

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. a letter from George Smith, giving an abstract of a cuneiform description of the temple, quoted in Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, Appendix II.

that time a statue twelve cubits high, of solid gold. . . . In this manner then was the precinct adorned ; and there were in addition many private offerings.<sup>1</sup>

Merodach therefore was *the* Baal or Bel, the greatest and most widely revered of all the Bels. Under this name he is referred to in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> At first it would appear that he represented one of the phases of the sun, probably the sun at its rising. Later however he was identified with the planet Jupiter. More than any other deity, Merodach is associated with the greatness and fortunes of the Babylonian people ; and to him most frequently and importunately are hymns and prayers addressed.<sup>3</sup>

**Nebo.**—In the passage of the prophet Isaiah referred to above (xlvi. 1), *Nebo*, נְבוֹ, is mentioned by the side of Bel as sharing in the humiliation and defeat which overtake the false gods of Babylon before the face of Jehovah. Nebo was the son of Merodach, and had a shrine set apart for himself within the limits of his father's great temple at Babylon. Originally he was the patron god of Borsippa, a town situated close to Babylon, where the ruins of his temple,

<sup>1</sup> *Herod.*, Book I. chaps. 181, 183.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlv. 1 ; Jer. l. 2, li. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. *supra*, p. 97.

*Ê-Zida*, "the eternal house," have been discovered in the mounds now known as Birs-i-Nimrûd. When Borsippa was absorbed in Babylon, and became a mere suburb, Nebo also was brought under the influence of the lord of the latter city, and was made subordinate to Merodach. He is the god of sooth-saying and prophecy, as well as of writing and of literature generally; and his name is connected in its origin with the Hebrew term for a prophet, נָבִי. By Nebo the will and mind of Merodach were communicated to men; and his rôle thus corresponded to that of the Greek *Hermes*. In harmony too with this conception of his function and office, we find that in the later mythology he is identified with the planet Mercury.

Other divinities were of lesser importance, because attached to and worshipped in lesser cities. Thus *Adar*, or *Ninib*, was the meridian sun, or the sun as overcoming and dispelling the night, later made equivalent to the planet Saturn; and by descent he was the son of *Mul-lil* of *Nipur*.

**Nergal.**—*Nergal*, the god of Cutha, now Tell-Ibrahim, was represented also as a son of *Mul-lil*, and as the setting or dying sun regarded as a personification of death, and lord

of the world below. In the general distribution of the planets among the great gods, Mars fell to the lot of Nergal; who was therefore a blood-red fiery god, hastening to descend to his kingdom beneath the earth surrounded by flaming clouds. Thus all the known planets became identified with one or other of the chief divinities.

**Tammûz.**—Lastly, *Tammûz* (תַּמְּזַר, Ezek. viii. 14) symbolized the bright short-lived sun-god of spring, beloved and mourned by Ishtar, and sought for by her after his death in the realms below.

**Ashur.**—In contrast with the numerous local deities of Babylonia, there is found in Assyria a single national god, perhaps in his inception the patron god of the mother-city Assur, but as he comes before us historically attached not to a place but to a people; who accompanies them in their journeyings, and is invoked by them at all times of need. It is of course true that with the Babylonian advance northwards, many of the gods originally local, as Merodach and Nebo, were carried with them, and are in consequence invoked by Assyrian kings in their inscriptions with as much fervour as in their native country. But they never took the place of *Ashur*, the great national deity, who personi-

fied as it were the Assyrian people, and was the living sign and seal of their power and good fortune. In him was much more nearly realised than in any divinity of Babylonia proper, even in Merodach himself, the conception of a supreme god, supreme not only over his own tribe or nation, but over the whole earth.<sup>1</sup> To him the Assyrian turned in extremity with a sense of national ownership, and the conviction that his honour was bound up with the existence and prosperity of his people. Ashur fought for them in the front of every battle, inspired every counsel, and gave its success to every enterprise. In him we have the closest parallel, which the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates can show, to Jehovah, the national god of the Jews. Sennacherib spoke in thoroughly Assyrian fashion, when he challenged Hezekiah to show reason

<sup>1</sup> A most interesting and attractive suggestion is made by the Hon. Miss Plunkett in an article on the Median Calendar and the Constellation Taurus, *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, vol. xix. p. 229 ff., that the name Ashur or Assur is identical with Ahura, the supreme god of the Persians. As to whether the conjecture can be substantiated or not, I do not feel competent to express an opinion. The connection, if established, between the Assyrians and the ancestors of the Medes and Persians would explain the contrast between the early forms of the Babylonian and Assyrian religions. "We look upon *Assur* as a 'loan-word' adopted from the Aryan *Asura*." *Ubi cit.* p. 243.

why his God should deliver Jerusalem, seeing that all the gods of the cities and countries heretofore assailed by the great king had failed to deliver their lands out of his power.<sup>1</sup>

**Summary : Characteristics of Worship.**— In this brief survey of the nature of the Babylonian people and gods, a survey altogether too contracted and inadequate, and which has of necessity omitted much that is of interest and importance, two facts seem prominently to stand forth with respect to the religion. First and very noticeable is its local character, its attachment to places and towns, the manner in which its deities and worship cluster around localities. Each god is a little kinglet within his own domain, commanding the homage and devotion of his own subjects, but unrecognised outside; and extending his authority in the same way as earthly rulers, by conquest, peaceable or otherwise, of the surrounding settlements and countries. This is a state of things that we have already learnt to recognise as characteristic of primitive tribal divisions, when the clan or enlarged family forms the unit, and each tribe is independent, often suspicious, of its neighbour. Only that here in Babylonia there is no trace of a nomad or wandering life, such as obtains,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxvi. 18 ff., xxxvii. 11 ff.

for example, in Arabia or the mountainous regions of Kurdistân. Already in the earliest periods to which the records carry us back, tribal distinctions, if such ever really existed, have been obliterated; the people are homogeneous, as far as religious ideas are concerned; and a roving pastoral mode of life has been superseded by fixed settlements on the soil. The township is the unit, both political and religious, not the nomad encampment. And whether we are quite justified in assuming that the former condition must in the history of the nation have been preceded by the latter, even though no record thereof is to be traced, can only, for the present at least, remain an open question.

The second striking fact in the history and development of the Babylonian religion is its mixed character. It contains and combines elements taken from the most diverse sources, originating as it would seem in the most dissimilar habits of mind. With a brief reference to the most important of these, some of which have already incidentally come under review, the present discussion of the creed and worship of Babylonia and Assyria must draw to a conclusion.

**Shamanism.**—One of the earliest, if not the



earliest and most primitive strain in these religions, we have seen to be that of *Shamanism*, or the worship of demons, combined with the practice of sorcery and magic; postulating therefore the existence of a powerful class of magician priests, intermediaries between living men and these unseen beings, competent to influence them and to restrain from the execution of their malicious purposes. These evil spirits are conceived of as present everywhere, haunting and taking possession of every object animate or inanimate, and even entering into men and women, making them the slaves of their malevolent will. Sickness, for example, was regarded as an evidence of demoniacal possession; while greater epidemics, plagues, etc., were tokens of the wrath of the more powerful deities. Generally speaking also, the demons of Babylonia are ill-natured and hostile, bent on injuring and causing hurt and loss to mankind, while those of Egypt are mild, favourable, or in the worst case neutral.

**Nature Worship.**—Closely allied to this belief in and fear of demons was nature worship on a broader scale. The rivers, hills, and plains, the clouds and storms, the forces and phenomena of nature, are all deified, and appropriate homage is paid to them. It is a familiar fact that demono-

latry and a superstitious reverence for the powers of nature go hand in hand, and are rarely if ever disjoined. Where you meet with the one, the other is neither historically nor practically far distant. It was so with the peoples of the Mesopotamian plain. But with them the fear of the demons, the powers that willed and had the ability to accomplish evil, held possession of the largest place in their imaginations.

**Totemism.** — Another element that entered into the composite religion of the Babylonians, to what extent it is not easy to say, was *Totemism*. The representation of Ea as half-man, half-fish, or as clothed in a fish's skin, can hardly be dissociated from totemistic ideas, although it would appear that in historic times animals were never in Babylonia actually the objects of worship. Nor, with the exception of Ea, were the greater gods ever represented under animal, or semi-animal form. Contrast this with the universal animal cult, and the animal-headed divinities of Egypt. Certain creatures however were regarded as under the protection of, or sacred to individual deities, as the eagle to the sun-god, the bull and dog to Merodach, the pig to Adar, the goat to Mul-lil, the antelope as well as the fish to Ea. Lesser

gods, on the other hand, and the genii, both good and evil, are constantly depicted with animal features and attributes. These indications, slight as they may seem to be, and the prevalence of augury or divination by means of birds, all point back to an earlier pre-historic age, when totemistic ideas and practices were widely spread. They clearly however never obtained such a hold of the people as in Egypt.

**Sabaism.**—A third element, of more importance in Babylon than perhaps amongst any other people, was star-worship, *Sabaism*, the cult of the host of heaven. Each individual star, as well as the several constellations, if not actually conceived of as a deity, was yet the home of the spirit of a god; and the reverence due to the divinity himself was easily transferred to the radiant spot in which he was believed to dwell. That which was originally, in some cases at least, merely the residence and abode, became identified with the god who inhabited it. Thus, as we have seen, each of the five known planets was assigned to one of the greater gods, not only as his dwelling-place, but coalescing as it were with him, imbued with his spirit, partaking of his attributes, and imparting to him of its own. What has been termed “astro-theology,” the doctrine of the heavenly bodies

and of their influence upon human destiny, filled an exceptionally large place in the theories and beliefs of the Babylonian peoples. It is an illustration of the same fact and tendency, that most, if not all the towns had their own especial sun-god, whose worship, with that of the numerous moon-deities, was bound up with similar religious conceptions and views of the constitution of the universe.

**Doctrines.** — Is it possible to extract any fixed or definite theology out of these heterogeneous elements? The Babylonians held many beliefs, engaged in much worship, clung to and circulated a rich store of mythology and legends. But their beliefs seem never to have crystallized into any strongly-marked doctrine, as was the case, for instance, with the doctrine of immortality among the Egyptians. They troubled themselves little about the condition of their dead friends; nor in the oldest texts is much if any reference to be traced to a life after death.

**Future Life.**—In the later writings, however, mention is frequently made of an unseen world beyond the grave, conceived of as below the earth, where heroes and those who have received due burial pass a life of sensual comfort and indulgence, while the hapless unburied and

neglected shades suffer the tortures of hunger and thirst. In all probability this belief in a kind of shadowy existence after death, curiously similar to the Homeric Hades, must have met with widespread acceptance long before it made its appearance in literature. Beyond and above this ill-defined region was the realm of the gods; which at first apparently identified with, was soon distinguished from the world of the dead. There the great gods dwelt in serene and undisturbed bliss, and in their felicity the semi-divine, semi-mythical heroes of old shared. Up to this point there seems to be no thought of reward or punishment in the life beyond the grave, no conception of a different lot for well-doers and evil-doers; rich and poor, high and low, all fare alike, independently of personal merit or demerit. Subsequently however there is found a more developed and spiritual idea of the after-life, when the heaven of Ea and the gods is opened not only to the deified heroes of ancient time, but also to the great and good of the present. As far therefore as the doctrine of a future life is concerned, a distinct advance may be traced from the shadowy and material to a higher and purer, even if still imperfect and rudimentary form of belief.

**Fate.**—There existed also among the Baby-

lonians a theory of destiny or fate, although neither so sharply defined nor so effective in its influence on practical life as with other nations who had formulated and held doctrines of a similar character. *Mamit*, rule or law, is exalted to the position of a goddess, and controls with a power that usually makes for evil the workings of the universe and the destinies of men. She is declared to be superior in might to the gods themselves; and like the angel of death appears as the inexorable inflicter of disease and plague. But human fortunes, and the control of the future, were associated in Babylonia much more closely with the stars than with *Mamit*. The priests might invoke the latter, and thus bring a curse on whomsoever they would; wielding an instrument of terror, which doubtless contributed largely to their own influence and aggrandisement. But, on the other hand, the whole surface of the heavens was parcelled out into regions or constellations, through and over which the sun, moon, and planets moved, determining unalterably in their course the life and destinies of every man. *Mamit* was like the thunderbolt, striking unexpectedly here and there with irresistible force. By the stars, in accordance with unchanging inevitable laws, all the routine and events of earth were fixed and controlled.

Influence on Greek and Jewish Belief. — It might perhaps be regarded as an open question how far the Greeks were indebted to Babylonia for their knowledge and beliefs on religious and scientific subjects; but beyond dispute there existed between the Jews on the one hand, and the Babylonians and Assyrians on the other, an intimate and far-reaching connection. How much was due to direct intercourse, and how much to inheritance from a common original source, we are not in a position to decide. In all probability the obligation of both to a common ancestry greatly exceeded the direct obligation of either to the other. The examples of similar institutions and practices are too numerous to be matter of accident. At Babylon from the earliest times every seventh day was observed as a day of rest, and bore the title of Sabbath, *Sabbatu*. Representations of a tree of life and tree of knowledge may be seen on their monuments; in subsequent times these were confused together or identified; and of their fruit only the initiated were admitted to eat. Reference has already been made to the Babylonian stories of the creation and the deluge. Elsewhere is preserved a record of the building at Borsippa of "the illustrious mound," which bears no little resemblance to the Biblical

account of the Tower of Babel. In the later period of their history also, the strength and permanence of the impression made upon the Jewish nation by the Babylonian exile can hardly be exaggerated.

**Review.**—On a careful review then of the whole, may it not be said that although we do not meet in Babylonia with any striking distinctive doctrine, as in Egypt, yet the record is distinctly a record of progress achieved, from a lower to a higher platform of faith and practice? Out of the chaos of conflicting elements, of rudimentary religious conceptions, which we can hardly be wrong in ascribing to the encounter and jostling together of different races, there emerged or were developed loftier ideas, and a purer less material belief. The advance was not perhaps very great, or the position gained very high. The disentanglement of the spirit from the letter only proceeded to a degree that was still far short of perfection. But the religious beliefs of the people, as exhibited to us in their later monuments and literature, unquestionably bear evidence of a loftier moral and spiritual tone and character than the earlier. And when as a distinct nationality the Babylonian and Assyrian alike are overwhelmed and disappear before the invading forces of the



Medes and Persians, there is absorbed and passes from sight something finer and nobler far, than revealed itself many centuries before from out of the mists of a dim and unfathomed antiquity.



# ZOROASTRIANISM

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TRANSLATIONS.—*Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford, vol. iv. Vendîdâd, second edition, 1895; and vol. xxiii. Yashts, etc., 1883, by James Darmesteter; vol. xxxi. Yasna, Visparad, etc., 1887, by L. H. Mills.

## ZOROASTRIANISM

**A**NTIQUITIES and Influence. — The ancient sacred religion of Persia has exercised an influence, and aroused an interest, out of all proportion to the present number of its adherents. From its home in the east of Persia it became known to, and profoundly impressed the Greeks; who have left us accounts of its reputed founder, and of his doctrines. Herodotus, though he does not mention the name of Zoroaster, describes the customs and modes of worship of his followers (bk. i. 131–140). Plutarch (*De Is. et Osir.*, chaps. xlv., xlvii.) relates that he lived in the Trojan period, and gives a brief sketch of the “mythology of the magi”; how that they taught that there existed two gods, or rather a god and a demon, the one born from purest light, and the creator of good things, the other from darkness, and the creator of evil. These two, named Horomazes and Areimanius, are in a state of constant warfare with one another. During a first period of three thousand years Horomazes

is continually victorious, and holds his opponent in subjection. For a second and similar period the war is waged on equal terms, and they mutually destroy one another's works. Finally Areimanius is completely vanquished, and men attain to a condition of blessedness, in which they need no food, and their bodies cast no shadow. Strabo refers to the sacrifices and ritual observances of the Persians, and mentions the perpetual fire of the Magi (xv. 3). While Plato himself recognises Zoroaster, whom he calls the son of Horomazes, as the founder of Magian doctrine.<sup>1</sup> There is a supposed allusion to Zoroastrian customs in Ezek. viii. 16 f. The wise men from the east are *μάγοι* (Matt. ii. 1, 7, 16); and the same term is applied to Elymas the Jew, in the island of Cyprus (Acts xiii. 6, 8). Of the origin however and early history, even the birthplace of the religion thus widely recognised, nothing is known. That it is of great antiquity is certain. Also that it is closely related to primitive forms of Brahmanical faith, as revealed to us and taught in the Indian Vedas. But the precise nature of that relation is in dispute. It passes under various names, Zoroastrianism from its supposed founder, Mazdaism from the name

I. Alcib. 122 A. Even if the dialogue is not genuine, at least it belongs approximately to the time of Plato.

of its supreme deity, Magism from the title of its priests, or in reference to its modern developments Parsiism. Its real beginnings however we are unable to trace.

**Relations to Judaism, Christianity, and Muhammadanism.**—The influence of Zoroastrian doctrine and thought on later Rabbinic Judaism was very great; and in the early centuries of our era on Christianity itself, whose Gnostic developments were inspired by teaching derived from Persia. The same is true of pre-Islâmic Arabia and of Muhammad himself, who borrowed many of his doctrines, especially those having reference to death the resurrection and the last judgement, perhaps indirectly, from the magi. When Persia itself was conquered and overrun by the Muhammadan Arabs in the seventh century, a remnant migrated to India, to escape persecution and forcible conversion to Islâm. There they settled on the west coast, in the neighbourhood of Surat; but later removed to Bombay, where the majority of them are now found, although a few are to be met with in most of the large towns of the peninsula.

**Parsîs.**—The Parsîs have uninterruptedly maintained their own distinctive character and dress, and are amongst the most intelligent of the population and the most receptive of Western

learning and influences. They occupy usually the position of wealthy merchants, agents, and bankers, and are well known for their generosity and benevolence, especially towards those of their own faith. It is said that no Parsî has ever suffered from want, or been reduced to beggary. Their total numbers according to the last census are slightly under ninety thousand. In Persia also there is a small minority, not exceeding seven or eight thousand, who still cling tenaciously to their ancient creed. They are principally confined to the towns of Yezd and Kirmân, where they are oppressed and made to suffer under all manner of disabilities by their dominant Musalmân neighbours; and are reported to be dwindling numerically year by year.

**Zoroaster.**—Of Zoroaster, the reputed founder, but more probably reformer of the Magian religion, little is known, or can with certainty be affirmed. Legend and fable have been busy with his name and life to a more than ordinary degree. His very existence has been questioned. And if that denial may be set aside as an extreme of incredulity, there yet remains little with regard to his circumstances, work, or time, that can be positively asserted to be beyond the reach of doubt. The name itself is a Greek corruption of the old Persian Zarathushtra, which



became in the later language Zardusht, under which form it appears in the comparatively modern books of the Parsîs. Zarathushtra is apparently not really a proper name at all, but a title, like "high-priest" of the Jews; and with somewhat of the same meaning.<sup>1</sup> The Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrian faith, gives details of his life; but these are mostly late and untrustworthy. All perhaps that can be safely said is that he lived and taught in ancient Irân under a king Vîstâspa, or Hystaspes. By some this Vîstâspa has been identified with Hystaspes, father of Darius; and this would fix the date of Zoroaster to about the middle of the fifth century before Christ. This is the belief of the Parsîs themselves, but it seems that on genealogical and other grounds the identification can hardly be correct. Certainly Darius and his successors were Zoroastrians, although the name of the prophet and founder of their faith does not occur in the Achæmenian inscriptions. His date must therefore be placed antecedently to their reigns. By the Greeks and Romans a much greater, almost fabulous antiquity was assigned to him. Some

<sup>1</sup> Haug in his latest work (*Essays on the Parsîs*, Eng. trans., 3rd ed., p. 296, note) inclines to give the word a general meaning, such as "senior, chief (in a spiritual sense)."

again have made him a contemporary of Moses.

**Eras of Zoroastrian Ascendency.**—Tradition tells us of two important periods during which the Zoroastrian religion exceedingly flourished, periods closed in each instance by a conspicuous disaster, when the adherents of the faith were dispersed and slain. The first was in the time of Alexander the Great, when that monarch invaded Persia, and burned its capital Persepolis. Many of the priests were put to death, the fire-temples rased to the ground, and their worship prevented. While of the two authoritative copies of the sacred scriptures preserved at Persepolis, written—so it was said—on cowhides with ink of gold, the one was by his orders destroyed, and the second was conveyed to Greece, in order that it might be translated into the Greek tongue. Under the Sasanian kings, in the early centuries of our era, Zoroastrianism revived. The rulers of this dynasty adopted the rôle of patrons of the magi or priests; and devoted their attention to the endeavour to collect together, and as far as possible restore the books of the sacred literature, which had been scattered and largely lost. The attempt was only partially successful, as the fragmentary and interpolated character of the works that

have come down to us bear witness. Then came the irruption of the Muhammadans, the second catastrophe, sweeping away all culture civilisation and art; and driving forth into exile the best of those who refused to submit to the yoke of Islâm. It is only, comparatively speaking, in our own day, that a revived interest has borne fruit in successful research into the history, development, and extant literature of the ancient religion of Persia, now professed in a somewhat modified form, and containing elements borrowed from surrounding faiths, by the Parsîs of modern India.

**Parsî Scriptures.**—The history of the recovery by European scholarship of a knowledge of the Parsî Scriptures, the Zoroastrian Bible, reads like a romance. A century and a half ago, in the year 1754 A.D., a young Frenchman, Anquetil Duperron, was shown a few pages copied from a sacred book of the Parsîs, which no one in Europe was able to read. He at once conceived the idea and purpose of himself visiting the East, there studying these sacred works under the guidance of the Parsî priests, and returning home, having secured, as he hoped to do, a complete copy for translation into French. In order to reach India and carry out his intention, he enlisted as a private soldier in the

service of the French East India Company, and was exposed to much hardship and suffering on his way to the East. No other means however of accomplishing the journey were open to him. On his arrival in India, the authorities of the Company, recognising his genius and the greatness and importance of the object he had at heart, set him free from all obligation towards themselves. And Duperron was able to spend several years in Surat and Bombay, learning the language from his Parsî teachers, obtaining manuscripts, and by study of the people and their customs preparing himself for his task. In 1761 he returned to Europe, and ten years later published in two vols. 4to his "*Zend-Avesta*, the work of Zoroaster, containing the theological, physical, and moral ideas of this law-giver . . . translated into French from the Zend original, with Notes and several Treatises for illustrating the matters contained in it."

The work, together with the theories and principles on which it was founded, was received in some quarters, notably by Sir William Jones at Oxford, with distrust and opposition. There can be no doubt that the translation, as was inevitable with a first attempt, was in many places faulty and incomplete. But the principles adopted, and main results achieved, have

stood the searching tests which scholars have applied. It was at once pointed out that the language in which these books were written was closely allied to Sanskrit, and that their mythology agreed in large part with the mythology of ancient India. The rock inscriptions of Persepolis and Behistûn were deciphered, and shown to be written in a dialect cognate to that of the books. And the labours of Anquetil Duperron were proved to rest on a sure basis. To France therefore belongs the credit of giving to the world the first translation of a sacred literature in interest and importance hardly inferior to any. Many scholars have followed in the path that Duperron opened out. The original text of the Avesta has been issued more than once within the last fifty years; the latest and best edition is that of K. F. Geldner, published at Stuttgart. The best complete translation is contained in the *Sacred Books of the East*, vols. iv., xxiii., and xxxi., by the late Professor Darmesteter and Dr. Mills.

**The Avesta.**—The Zend-Avesta then—to give the work before us its usual title—is all that remains of a sacred literature which must at one time have been of very considerable extent; and the composition of which must have been spread, like that of the Hebrew Testament or

the Indian Vedas, over many years, and probably centuries. No other work is extant, written in the Avesta language. The precise meaning of the term itself is not beyond dispute. By most it is considered to be equivalent to the Sanskrit "Veda," and therefore to signify "knowledge"; Darmesteter however would give to it rather the meaning of "prescription," "law."<sup>1</sup> The name Zend-Avesta is based on a misconception, the expression used in the work itself being Avesta and Zend, *Avistâk va Zand*, or text and commentary; the term Avesta being employed to denote the sacred text, Zand the explanatory notes, or running commentary, in a different and later form of the language, interwoven with the text, or compiled into separate treatises. This language is *Pahlavî*, the language of Persia under the Sasanian dynasty; in which a vast amount of illustrative and exegetical material concerning the Avesta, its history and contents, has been preserved.

The Avesta proper, as now extant, consists of four distinct parts of unequal value and different date:—

1. *Yasna*.—The *Yasna*, a collection of hymns or litanies in seventy-two chapters, intended for use

<sup>1</sup> Old Persian âbastâ, "the law" (*S. B. E.*, vol. iv., 2nd ed., p. xxxi., note 2).

at the sacred Yasna ceremony, when they were to be recited at the sacrifice. Portions of this work, as extant, are written in an archaic form of the language, and are the only parts of the Avesta which claim to have Zoroaster himself for their author.

**Gâthas.**—These are the so-called five *Gâthas*, or songs,—short discourses, sometimes in the form of question and answer, on philosophical and metaphysical subjects, written in metre and intended for chanting by the priests. They bear a complete and close analogy to the Sanskrit hymns of the Rig-Veda. The following are the titles given to them:—

(1) *Gâtha Ahunavaiti*, chaps. XXVIII.—XXXIV. of the Yasna, containing prayers and teaching of Zarathushtra, together with a few sayings composed probably by some of his immediate disciples.

(2) *Gâtha Ushtavaiti*, chaps. XLIII.—XLVI., further sayings of Zarathushtra, often with little apparent connection or order, announcing his commission, and proclaiming his doctrines to the assembled peoples.

(3) *Gâtha Spentâmainyu*, chaps. XLVII.—L., a collection of verses, many of them by disciples of the prophet, setting forth the greatness and worthiness of the supreme god, Ahura.

(4) *Gâtha Vohukshathrem*, chap. LI., a solitary chapter containing instruction, delivered perhaps publicly in the congregation, on the nature and claims of the same deity.

(5) *Gâtha Vahishtôishti*, chap. LIII., of a similar character, probably somewhat later than the two preceding.

The remaining parts of the Yasna are to be ascribed to a period not so early as the age of Zarathushtra. An exception should possibly be made of the so-called *Yasna Haptanhaiti*, or Yasna of the seven chapters, viz. XXXV.—XLII., which seems to be not far removed in point of age from the Gâthas, but marks a certain advance in religious ideas, and introduces new conceptions and new names. The contents are simple prayers, written in prose, and addressed to Ahura Mazda, to the fire, or to angels and other good beings. It further makes no claim to be the actual composition of Zoroaster himself.

2. *Visparad*.—The *Visparad*, a similar collection of liturgical pieces, twenty-three in number, but not independent in the main at least of the earlier Yasna.

3. *Vendîdâd*.—The *Vendîdâd*, the “priest’s code” of the Avesta, consisting of twenty-two chapters, or *fargards*, wherein are set forth



religious precepts, ceremonial and moral laws, incumbent upon all the followers of the "good Lord." The instructions and communications are put into the mouth of Ahura Mazda, who imparts knowledge to Zarathushtra, in answer to his inquiries. As to the date of the work, the various chapters seem to have been composed at different periods, and by different authors. Some parts are of a considerable age. And the whole is not improbably due, as Haug suggests, to successive generations of high-priests, who added to, or modified the code by which they were guided in their ministrations.

These three, the Yasna, Visparad, and Vendidâd form the most sacred portion of the Avesta; and may be recited only by the priests. The metrical Gâthas are the oldest, as can be inferred not only from their contents but their dialect. The whole, however, is usually considered by the Parsîs to be the work of Zoroaster himself.

4. *Khordah Avesta*.—Lastly, and of inferior authority and sanctity, comes the *Khordah Avesta*, or "little Avesta," which is recited alike by priests and laymen. Although regarded as inferior to the earlier Avesta, parts of it are in more habitual use, some of the short prayers of which it consists being repeated daily by

every orthodox Parsî. There are comprised also a number of hymns of praise called *Yashts*, in honour of particular divinities, of which twenty-four are given in translation by Dr. Darmesteter. Originally, however, according to the tradition, there were thirty, one for the patron deity of each of the thirty days of the month. A few other fragments are included of no great importance. The Khordah Avesta is the latest in date, and the most modern in spirit, of the sacred Zoroastrian literature.

**Original Form of Avesta.**—In a later Parsî work, the *Dînkard*, which claims to have been written about the year 1000 A.D., a tradition is preserved with reference to the original contents of the Avesta. According to its statements, the Avesta in its earliest form consisted of twenty-one treatises, or *Nasks*, of which a complete synopsis is given. Each Nask contained, besides the actual sacred text, a portion of Zand, or commentary. The list of subjects includes moral religious and social law, mythology, metaphysics, the future life, and physical science; and they fall into three groups, theological, legal, and mixed, each group consisting of seven Nasks. The history also is recorded of the collection and editing of the sacred books under the Sasanian kings. Of

these Nasks only the nineteenth, the Vendîdâd, is extant in its entirety; of others fragments can be traced, but in some cases nothing is known beyond the bare names. It appears probable however that much, if not all of our present Avesta was entered in the Nasks under different titles, by which we fail to recognise them. As the list stands, both the Yasna, the Visparad, the Yashts, and the Khordah Avesta are completely wanting. This would seem to point again to the same conclusion, that the texts preserved to us are only remnants of a much more considerable literature, which was once in circulation, but has been lost.

**Order of Composition.**—Thus the most ancient portion of the Avesta, as we possess it, it is the Gâthas, together with certain other passages and formulæ in the Yasna, including the Yasna Haptanhaiti, which are written in the Gâtha dialect, and are little if at all inferior in point of date. Later in time of composition are the remaining metrical portions of the Yasna, the Yashts, and parts of the Vendîdâd and Visparad. Most recent are those chapters of the Avesta which are written in prose.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The most able and brilliant French scholar, Professor James Darmesteter, whose death is a heavy loss to Oriental studies,

**Teaching of Zoroaster.**—It is clear therefore that we must go in the first instance to the Gâthas, in order to learn what was the original teaching of Zoroaster himself. That teaching became in subsequent times corrupted, modified, and supplemented from many sources, and by many minds. It is usually asserted that Zoroaster expounded a system of pure Dualism, the eternal and independent existence of the two great principles of good and evil; and that his

has recently endeavoured to establish an entirely different order of development, historical and chronological, within the Avesta. According to his view, the Gâthas are really the latest portion of the Avestan literature, and "represent the latest growth of the Zoroastrian spirit." They are to be ascribed to the first century of our era, or possibly a hundred years earlier. At the same time Professor Darmesteter admits that their dialect is an older form of the language than is found in the rest of the Avesta. "If the Gâthas were written in the first century of our era, it follows that they must have been written in a dead language." There has further been somewhat extensive borrowing on the part of the authors of the Avesta from later Judaism, and from Greek philosophy especially Neo - Platonism. The unanimous judgement however of antiquity was that the borrowing had been in an opposite sense, and from the other direction. That verdict is not lightly to be set aside. The wide learning and sympathies of the late professor demand a respectful consideration for any views that he advocates; but in this instance it does not appear to me that he is likely to win many followers. Cp. *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. iv., 2nd ed., Introduction.

therefore is the one great and influential religion, which has stopped short of the doctrine of a unique and paramount source of all. Such was undoubtedly the theory of later Zoroastrianism; which ascribed to its founder the simple and undisguised dualistic doctrines, which were currently accepted in its own day. Such also was the belief of the Greeks themselves concerning the philosophy and system formulated by him. But it may be permitted to doubt whether they were right. Apart altogether from the inherent improbability that a thinker, acute and penetrating as Zoroaster must have been, could have rested content with a double cause of all, and made no attempt to explain or to get behind these two principles to an antecedent source and originator of both, there are passages in the Gâthas themselves which appear distinctly to assert the opposite view. And although there are unquestionably other passages, which *prima facie* at least bear a dualistic interpretation, it is fair to explain these as giving the popular and superficial impression, while the real mind of the philosopher expressed itself in language inspired by deeper and truer thought. Plato is not always to be taken literally, when he appears to fall in with the popular conceptions, be they materialistic

fables or plausible subtleties, of his contemporaries. There are then phrases and language used in the Gâthas, which seem to prove that the prophet in truth regarded these two principles, or spirits of good and of evil, as subservient to, or emanations from a single supreme being, creator and lord of all. For example:—

Therefore as the first did I conceive of Thee, O Ahura Mazda ! as the one to be adored with the mind in the creation, as the Father of the Good Mind within us, when I beheld Thee with my eyes as the veritable maker of our Righteousness, as the Lord of the actions of life. *Yasna xxxi. 8.*

Where are thine offerers, O Mazda ! Thy helpers, who as the enlightened of the Good Mind are producing the doctrines with wide mental light as inherited treasures, in misfortune and in woe ? I know none other than You ; then do Ye save us through Your righteousness. *Ib. xxxiv. 7.*

So I conceived of thee as bountiful, O Great Giver, Mazda ! when I beheld Thee as supreme in the generation of life ; when, as rewarding deeds and words, Thou didst establish evil for the evil, and happy blessings for the good, by Thy virtue, in the creation's final change. *Ib. xliii. 5.*

He who gives to this (good citizen) that which is better than the good ; yea, He who bestows on him in accordance with his religious choice is Ahura Mazda. And this will He bestow through His divine Authority, while on the withholder of the sacrifice He will send worse than the evil, in the last turning of the creation in its course.

So grant me also, O Thou most bountiful Spirit Mazda, Thou who hast made both the Kine and the waters and the plants, both Immortality and Welfare, those two eternal

powers, and through Thy Good Mind in the doctrine. *Ib.* li. 6, 7.<sup>1</sup>

**Later Zoroastrianism not Absolutely Dualistic.**  
—Neither is later Zoroastrianism dualistic in the strict sense of teaching the existence of two equal independent powers of good and evil, alike eternal and omniscient, of equivalent authority, dignity, and rights. The lord of evil, though he possesses the power of creating evil and evil beings, is strictly limited in his capacity, and is neither omnipresent nor all-knowing.<sup>2</sup> *Ahriman*, the Zoroastrian power of darkness, has often been compared to the evil one, the devil of the Christian faith. To the former, however, is ascribed a more independent position, more extensive rights, and a greater ability to hurt

<sup>1</sup> I quote from Dr. Mills' translation in *S. B. E.*, vol. xxxi. Cp. also Yasna xxx. 8; xxxi. 19, 21; xlv. 3-7; xlvii. 1, 2; xlviii. 4; xlix. 1, 12; li. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "If it be necessary for a dualism that the evil spirit be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, or eternal, then is the Parsî religion no dualism. The *Bundahish* distinctly asserts that the evil spirit is not omniscient and almighty; that his understanding is backward, so that he was not aware of the existence of Aûharmazd, till he arose from the abyss, and saw the light; that he is unobservant and ignorant of the future, till it is revealed to him by Aûharmazd; that his creatures perish at the resurrection, and he himself becomes impotent, and will not be. Nowhere is he supposed to be in two places at once, and to know what is occurring elsewhere than in his own presence." E. W. West in *S. B. E.*, vol. v. p. lxix.

and harm. The religion of Zoroaster moreover contemplates also the coming of a future saviour, who will destroy the evil, and establish the permanent unmixed reign of righteousness.

**Ahura Mazda.** — The good spirit bears the name of *Ahura Mazda*, perhaps meaning the "wise creator." In Pahlavî the name appears in the form *Aûharmazd*; and in later Persian was corrupted still further into *Ormuzd*. He it is who is represented in the Avesta as in colloquy with *Zarathushtra*, and answering the questions put to him by the latter. *Ahura Mazda* is the lord of the whole universe, creator of all, author and giver of light and life, and of everything that is good. His opponent is *Angro Mainyush*, the "hurtful spirit," the malignant author of darkness and death, and of all that is evil. The world is the theatre of a perpetual conflict between the two spirits, in which men take part according to their natures and desires; this strife will issue in the triumph of the good, and the overthrow and destruction of the evil. Of the precise position occupied by *Angro Mainyush* in the *Gâthas*, as a more or less definite personification of evil, it is not quite easy to judge. In the opinion of some he was regarded by Zoroaster himself as merely one of two



spirits in subordination to, or perhaps possessed by the supreme deity Ahura Mazda; the other being *Spento Mainyush*, or the good spirit.<sup>1</sup> The contrast or opposition, therefore, is originally rather between the two spirits of Ahura Mazda, than between him and any independent or co-equal power. And the true analogy is to be seen in the condition of man himself, who finds by experience that he is drawn in two directions by the opposite impulses—the spirits—of good and of evil. Certainly in these early texts the figure of *Angro Mainyush* is much less clearly defined, as it is less commanding and prominent, than that of Ahura Mazda. Probably the ambiguity and difficulty is owing more to the corrupt state of the text, and to our inability to interpret it correctly, than to any indistinctness in the teaching of the author. It was only in later developments of the religion that *Spento Mainyush* became identified with Ahura Mazda; while his opposing or contrary spirit assumed a position of independence, and stood forth as engaged in actively counterworking the operations of the supreme deity.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Haug, p. 304; the passages quoted from the Yasna are xix. 9, lvii. 2. Of the former of these Dr. Mills denies that it is to be considered as put into the mouth of Ahura Mazda; cp. *S. B. E.*, vol. xxxi. p. 262, note.

**Subordinate Spirits.**—Besides these that have been named, the older Avesta recognises no other gods. There are however many subordinate spirits or genii, who execute the commands of Ahura Mazda or Angro Mainyush respectively, as their vicegerents over various departments of life and conduct. Of these the chief form a kind of heavenly council or cabinet; and, as their names seem to show, are really abstract moral and ethical conceptions personified. They are six in number, viz. *Vohu Mano*, good mind; *Asha Vahishta*, best righteousness; *Khshathra Vairya*, the wished-for kingdom; *Spenta Armaiti*, holy obedience or humility; *Haurvatât*, health, salvation; *Ameretât*, immortality. Plutarch was acquainted with this division; and gives the corresponding Greek terms for the first five, εὐνοία, ἀλήθεια, εὐνομία, σοφία, πλοῦτος. The last is ὁ τῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς καλοῖς ἡδέων δημιουργός, evidently a paraphrase for a name perhaps misread or misunderstood.<sup>1</sup> When Ahura Mazda is reckoned with them, the whole constitute the seven *Amesha Spentas*, “immortal holy ones,” corrupted in later Persian into *Amshaspands*. In addition to, and distinct from these was *Sraosha*, “hearing” or “obedience,” who personified and taught the

<sup>1</sup> *De Iside et Osiride*, ch. xlvii.

divine worship, which man was expected to render. To the praise of Sraosha an entire hymn of the Yasna (chap. lvii.) is devoted. The evil spirit also has his council, probably a later development to correspond with the celestial Amesha Spentas. Their names are given as follows:—*Akem Mano*, evil mind; *Indra*; *Sauru*, or *Saurva*; *Naunghaithya*; *Tauru*, or *Taurvi*; *Zairi*.<sup>1</sup> The second and third are the Vedic deities Indra and S'arva or S'iva. The name of the fourth has been compared with Nâs'atya, one of the As'vins of Indian mythology; he is the spirit of disloyalty and discontent. Tauru and Zairi seem to be personifications of disease and of death. These powers of wickedness lay plots together for the hurt and destruction of mankind, as the celestial hierarchy for his preservation and life. The history of the universe is the history of the conflict between the opposing forces. And man by his every act promotes the kingdom either of the light or of the darkness. The mission of Zoroaster is to instruct men how to avoid the evil and choose the good, and to declare the final and complete victory of righteousness.

**Eschatology of the Gâthas.**—The Gâthas also

<sup>1</sup> Vendidad, x. 9, 10; xix. 6.

teach the doctrine of a future life, and of the immortality of the soul. They concern themselves little with ritual and ceremonial questions, of which the later Avesta and Pahlavî works are so full. Man's actions, good and bad, as well as his thoughts and words, are recorded in a book; which is produced, and witnesses for or against him in the judgement after death. Sentence is then passed in accordance with its testimony. If the good thoughts and deeds predominate, the soul by the help of Ahura Mazda traverses in safety the bridge of *Chinvat*, and enters heaven; if the evil, in the attempt to cross he falls off the bridge into hell. Should the righteous and unrighteous works be evenly balanced, and his character and deserts therefore undetermined, he is dismissed to a kind of intermediate state, there to await the general judgement. This final and universal judgement will be held by *Saoshyâs*, the great prophet who is to appear; and will usher in the reign of truth and purity and justice, under the immediate and undisputed rule of Ahura Mazda. Saoshyâs himself will be a direct descendant of Spitama Zarathushtra, the founder of the true religion. When he comes, he will bring with him a new divine revelation, a twenty-second Nask. The resurrection of the body, though an article

of faith in later scriptures, does not seem to be expressly taught in the earlier Avesta.<sup>1</sup>

**Contents of Later Avesta.**—The later writings are concerned almost exclusively with legal and ceremonial matters, and give directions for ritual observances, which, generally speaking, are carried out by the Parsîs at the present day. These may be compared, especially in the minute care with which they make provision for every detail, with the Levitical code. The Vendîdâd is the great storehouse of these regulations. In this book Zarathushtra is represented as questioning Ahura Mazda, and receiving answers on all manner of topics, from the history of creation to laws of uncleanness, penalties for assault, and atonements for sin. New deities, or semi-deities, make their appearance, especially the *fravashis*, “protectors” or guardian angels, who watch over the interests and well-being of every man. Countless demons haunt his path at each moment of life, and are perpetually endeavour-

<sup>1</sup> Cp. for example Yasht xix. 10 ff. :—Ahura Mazda made the creatures, many and good . . . so that they may restore the world, which will thenceforth never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever living and ever increasing, and master of its wish, when the dead will rise, when life and immortality will come, and the world will be restored at its wish ; when the creation will grow deathless, the prosperous creation of the Good Spirit, etc.

ing to trip him up, to molest and destroy him. Evil spirits too take possession of the dead the instant life has departed; and can only be expelled by the look of a dog, four-eyed and yellow-eared. In practice almost any dog is permitted to be used. The modern Parsîs bring the animal into the presence of the corpse, and turn its head towards the dead body, to drive out the demon of corruption. This conception of the dog, who, according to another form of the story, watches at the entrance of the bridge of Chinvat, and by his barking frightens back the souls of evil-doers, and prevents them from crossing, is undoubtedly akin to myths of Cerberus, and the dog of Yama the Hindu lord of the lower world.

**Ritual.**—The ritual embodied in these books is, in its essence, a ritual of purification. The greater number of the regulations bear upon this subject. The most holy and pure element is the sacred fire, which is maintained perpetually burning in the house of every Zoroastrian or Parsî. Next to the fire in sanctity come earth and water. To defile one of these three by the touch of a dead body, or by anything that is given off or separated from the living body, as the breath, the cuttings of the hair, nail-parings, etc., entails the most severe penalties. To

burn a corpse, or to bury it, are alike inexpiable sins. The dead body is exposed in a building specially constructed for the purpose, apart from all human dwellings, called a *Dakhma*; where it is left to be devoured by the vultures. And lest the *Dakhma* should itself transmit defilement to the earth, it is theoretically at least separated from the ground by a golden thread. These buildings, usually placed on an eminence, are low round stone towers, having a raised stone platform or dais within, circular and sloping gently towards a pit in the centre of the *Dakhma*, divided into partitions in which the bodies are laid. In Bombay these places bear the name of Towers of Silence; and the sight is not a little gruesome of the scores of over-fed vultures hovering around. If the community is too poor to be able to erect a separate building, they may lay the dead body on the ground, "clothed with the light of heaven, and beholding the sun." (Vend. vi. 51). The priests who tend the everlasting or *Bahrām* fire must wear a veil before their lips, lest their breath should reach the blaze and defile it; to extinguish it is one of the greatest of sins. Digressions and discussions on mythology and medicine, on civil and religious disabilities, together with the penalties awarded to the

several classes of crime, occupy the greater part of the remainder of the sacred books.

**Morality of the Parsîs.**—In moral and ethical conceptions and manner of life the Parsîs approach more nearly to the ideal of the New Testament than any other non-Christian people. Their motto is "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds"; and as a rule they live according to it. They practise benevolence on a generous scale, and have established in Bombay many charitable institutions. There are two sects among them at the present day, the *Shenshais* and the *Kadmîs*, the former being by far the most numerous. Between these however there is no difference in doctrine, but merely in the time of celebrating the annual feasts. The chief festivals are at the New Year, the spring celebration at the vernal equinox, and the mid-summer festival in honour of *Mithra* the sun. Further ceremonies and feasts are held to celebrate the praise of Ahura Mazda or other divinities, or of a holy man deceased. Their adopted language is Gujarâtî, though all, or nearly all speak English. And a knowledge of the sacred tongue of the Avesta, or of the Pahlavî, is confined to the *dastûrs*, the high-priests; of whom however, at least until recently, few were able to do more than read or recite



the sacred text with little comprehension of its meaning. Below the dastûrs are two inferior orders of priests, the *mobâds* and the *herbâds*. The priestly office descends from father to son; but a priest may, if he pleases, lay aside his sacred rank and become a layman. The contrary step, the consecration of a layman to priestly functions, is not held permissible. The people term themselves *behâdîn*, or "followers of the best religion." The Parsís are all strict monogamists; and wear a sacred girdle, the *kôstî*,<sup>1</sup>—a practice which calls to mind the sacred thread of the Brahmans. It is however put on in an entirely different manner, being wound three times round the waist; and is composed of seventy-two threads to represent the seventy-two chapters of the Yasna. They allow the remarriage of widows, are careful and frequent in their ablutions, and practise elaborate funeral ceremonies with recitation of sacred texts.

**Zoroastrianism and Brahmanism.**—The question

<sup>1</sup> Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda:—O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! what is it that brings in the unseen power of Death?

Ahura Mazda answered:—It is the man that teaches a wrong Religion; it is the man who continues for three springs without wearing the sacred girdle, without chanting the Gâthas, without worshipping the Good Waters. *Vend.* xviii. 8, 9.

of the relation of Zoroastrianism to the religions of India, or rather to the religion of the Rig-Veda, is of great interest, and one on which widely divergent views are held. By some it is maintained that the Zoroastrian faith had its origin in a revolt against the practices and beliefs of the ancestors of the Brahmans, at a time when they dwelt with the forefathers of the Iranian stock in the highlands of Bactria and central Asia; and was therefore of the nature of a reform directed against formality and polytheism, against mere outward ceremonial and nature worship. There is much in the internal character of the religion itself which at first sight favours this view. Those who adopt it point to the fact that the ordinary term for an evil spirit in the Avesta is *daeva*, equivalent to *deva*, the Sanskrit name for god. And that, on the other hand the word *asura*, employed in ordinary Sanskrit only of demoniacal beings who are hostile to the gods, is in the Avestan language, in the form *ahura*, the highest term for the supreme being. It is to be noted, however, that in the ancient Rig-Veda *asura* is found used in a good sense, applied to the gods, and even to the pure and spiritual Varuna himself. The significance of the words in question has in fact become precisely inverted in the

two languages. For what reasons or in what manner this came to pass has never been satisfactorily explained. But the theory that a reformer or reformers set themselves deliberately to alter the meaning of words, in order to accentuate the departure from the old faith, does not appear very probable or one easy to carry out in practice.

Other parallels between the names and functions of the several deities have been noticed. Ahura Mazda has his Indian prototype in Varuna, the wide blue sky. *Mithra* is the sun, the Sanskrit *Mitra*. *Haoma*, the sacred drink of the worshippers of Ahura Mazda, is not other than the Soma of the Brahmins. Agni, the Sanskrit goddess of fire, is the Avestan *atar*; and the office and functions ascribed to each present striking similarities. The names further of three well-known Indian divinities, of whom Indra is the chief, reappear on the council who attend upon Ahriman, the great spirit of evil.<sup>1</sup> The very name applied in the Avesta to the opponents of the Zoroastrian religion, *daeva-yasna*, "deva-worshippers," has been thought to indicate a moral and religious, if not physical conflict with the followers of the Veda. Coincidences again

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 151.

have been pointed out with Buddhism, with Greek philosophy and Neo-Platonism, and with Jewish history and tradition.<sup>1</sup> Even the name of Buddha occurs in the Avesta, although not in the oldest portion,<sup>2</sup> as an opponent of the good religion, and a would-be destroyer of Zarathushtra himself. "Gaotema the heretic" is mentioned in the Fravardîn Yasht, i. 16. And the legend of Zarathushtra's temptation by Anglo Mainyush affords a curious parallel to that of the founder of Buddhism by Mâra. There are points of likeness in doctrine and cosmology to Philo, and even to the Pentateuch, which have been well brought out by Darmesteter.<sup>3</sup> The conception of Vohu Mano, good thought, the first created being, and the chief of the Amesha Spentas, presents a similarity, that can hardly be entirely accidental, to the *Λόγος* of Philo. Vohu Mano, like the *Λόγος*, is not only the first creation of Ahura Mazda, but is the instrument of all his other creations. He intercedes for men with the gods, and conveys to the human race a knowledge of their will. From all this Professor Darmesteter infers the late origin of the Zoroastrian religion, of the Avesta its sacred

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *supra*, pp. 131, 144 note.

<sup>2</sup> Vend. xi. 9 ; xix, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *S. B. E.*, vol. iv. p. liv. ff.

book, and especially of the Gâthas ; thus inverting the usually accepted order of production and date. But the unanimous voice of tradition, which there seems here no reason to question or distrust, places the indebtedness on the other side ; namely, that Philo and the Greek philosophers derived many of their thoughts and doctrines from Persia, as was undoubtedly the case with later Rabbinic theology, and the early heresies of Christendom. Buddhism, on the other hand, reached the country beyond the Indus, and the regions of Iran, soon after, if not as early as the reign of king As'oka in the third century before Christ. Remembering then that the Avesta is not the work of one man, composed and published within the limits of a lifetime, but a compilation extending probably over several centuries, it seems better to explain the references to Buddha as subsequent interpolations, when the two religions met and came into conflict.

We must be content then to leave the relation of Zoroastrianism to the pre-Brahmanical religion of the Rig-Veda undetermined, until further investigation shall have thrown more light upon an obscure and exceedingly interesting subject. It appears most probable that development in both religions followed parallel,

but, generally speaking, independent lines, from a yet more ancient form of Indo-Iranian cult. But the claim must be conceded, which its adherents make, that the Zoroastrian faith had its origin and first beginnings in a far past age, the darkness of which we cannot yet penetrate; and that therefore the religion that bears the name of Zoroaster is amongst the oldest religions of the world.

# MUHAMMADANISM

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## MUHAMMADANISM

IN entering upon the study of Muhammadanism, we enter upon an entirely new phase of religious life, unlike any that have hitherto occupied our attention. New circumstances, new environment, new national character, produce novel and altogether interesting results. We seem to pass at once from the dim shadow of antiquity to the broad daylight of our own times. And whereas in dealing with Egypt and Babylon,—to a less extent also in the case of the religion that takes its name from Zoroaster,—it was inevitable that we should content ourselves with inference more or less probable, and conjecture from facts or arguments often disputable, here we are able to stand on the firm ground of record and history. Not that the origin and early growth of Muhammadanism have been left untouched by legend and fable. Far from it. Round the person and character of its founder a wonder-loving people have heaped tales of marvel beyond what has gathered round any other figure in

history, with the exception perhaps of Buddha and Alexander the Great. It is not generally difficult, however, to sort the true from the false. If the residue of clear fact, especially with regard to the life and conduct of Muhammad himself, is not always as abundant as we could wish, we are yet left in no doubt as to the main outlines, and the succession of cause and effect in the history we wish to trace. The religions of Babylonia and Egypt, moreover, deeply as they touched contemporary peoples, and great as has been their influence on the world's progress and life, affect modern thought and belief only indirectly. Islâm is a living and potent, even if decadent force in the comity of nations to-day, and in the body politic and religious of the British Empire. To be indifferent to, or ignorant of the significance and power of the faith that reverences Muhammad as its prophet and founder, is to ignore the deepest feelings of many millions of our fellow-subjects, and to place ourselves at the wrong point of view for understanding and furthering the solution of the many problems, political social and religious, that come to the front when Christian and Muslim meet. For good or for evil, Muhammadanism exercises a present influence in British India and in the world, which no

man, whether military or civilian, whether Christian missionary or agnostic philosopher, can afford to neglect or despise.

**Contrast with Earlier Religions.**—A contrast then may be drawn in two particulars between the religion established and taught by Muhammad, and the systems prevalent in the lands of Egypt and Babylon, as they have already come before us in brief review. In these two respects it will be seen that Zoroastrianism holds a somewhat middle position, inclining to the side of Islâm, and having more community of nature with this faith than with the other two. Neither in Mesopotamia nor in Egypt does there stand forth any single individual as the organizer and shaper of the national creed and practice. It would seem, as far as our knowledge goes, that these religions grew and formed themselves by the concurrent, perhaps unconscious working of many minds. It is of course entirely otherwise with Muhammadanism. Zoroaster himself can claim only a dim and shadowy personality as compared with the Prophet of Arabia. Islâm owes its origin, its life, its form, to the impulse and teaching of one man. It must therefore be ranked among the great religions of the world with Buddhism in the East and Christianity in the West, each of them the creation of a single

master-mind and will. Further,—and this is the second point of contrast,—by the followers of Muhammad reverence is paid to a sacred book, the teaching and very words of which are believed to have been supernaturally communicated, and to whose precepts therefore unquestioning obedience is due. It may be said that something of the nature of a sacred book is found in Egypt, in the so-called Book of the Dead. The Parsîs also have their scriptures, which, fragmentary though their condition may be, are regarded as an authoritative rule of life and conduct. But with respect to the former, there is no evidence that this collection of writings was ever looked upon as infallible or inspired. It appears to have admitted of unlimited expansion, and in its contents and character to have been neither unique nor beyond imitation; partaking of the nature rather of magical formulæ than of wholesome and reliable instruction. The Qurân, in the eyes of Muhammadans, is the most rigidly exclusive book in the world; its sacred text is verbally inspired in the most absolute and dogmatic sense, capable of no defect and admitting of no modification. In this respect therefore Muhammadanism dissociates itself from these two great religions of the old world, and in its possession of and

dependence upon a sacred book takes its place by the side of the Brahmanism of India with its Veda, Zoroastrianism with its Avesta, Judaism with its Hebrew Scriptures, and Christianity with her Bible.

Arabia before Muhammad. — Of the early history and circumstances of Arabia before the time of Muhammad not much is known in detail, although the broad features and conditions are sufficiently clear. Large numbers of inscriptions have been found in the southern part of the peninsula, the date of the earliest of which is placed by scholars in the twelfth or thirteenth century before Christ. These, or the more ancient of them, belong to two great kingdoms, the Minæan and Sabæan, which alike had their capital cities in the south-western corner of the land.<sup>1</sup> It is certain that a very considerable intercourse, commercial and military, was carried on between Arabia and Mesopotamia from remote times; and, relying on the forms of the names of the reigning monarchs, it has even been claimed that the first Babylonian dynasty was of Arabian origin. Within the limits however of the peninsula itself, as far as it is possible to carry back research, the country

<sup>1</sup> Ma'in, or Ma'an : and Saba, or Sheba, מֶשֶׁבַּא, 1 Kings x. 1 ff. ; Ezek. xxvii, 22 ; Isa. lx. 6 ; Joel iv. 8.

has always been the home of wandering tribes of Bedawy race, bound together by a close tie of family kinship, and separated by deadly blood-feuds; travelling hither and thither in search of pasturage for their flocks and camels, or on more distant and adventurous journeys along the fixed caravan routes of commerce. Among these peoples there arose from time to time empires on a larger scale, and with a fixed and definite centre, as one or another chief was able more widely to extend his authority, and to transmit his power to his descendants. But these all appear to have been possessed of little cohesion, readily falling to pieces before external attack, and incapable of real consolidation or aggression, except at the expense of the weak nomad tribes in their immediate neighbourhood. They were uniformly characterized also by all the Arab qualities of strong passion and fanaticism, of impulsiveness and pride, of cruelty and love of sensual indulgence. The best known and most enduring of these kingdoms in later times were three in number. The *Ghassanids* of the north-west, whose capital city was Palmyra in the Syrian desert; and the *Lakhmids* in the north-east, with their centre at Hîra on the Euphrates. Of these the former leaned on the Roman empire, the latter on the Persian

monarchy. Both came under the influence of Christianity from the beginning of the fourth century onward; and both within two or three hundred years of this time were deprived of the last shadow of independence, and sank into the position of mere provinces of the neighbouring kingdoms. In the south there flourished the ancient and powerful state of the *Himyarites*, or Sabæans, a people whose origin and kinship are unknown, but who were closely related to, if not identical with the race of earliest immigrants into Abyssinia. Their sway extended over the entire southern portion of Arabia, the country of Hadramaut and Yemen. Here, according to the tradition, a great persecution of the Christians took place at the beginning of the sixth century, under a usurping chieftain who had become a convert to Judaism; and the Negus of Abyssinia was invited to interpose for their deliverance. He therefore sent an army, and drove out the usurper, converting the province into a Christian dependency of his own kingdom. This arrangement however only endured till the last quarter of the century, when the invaders were themselves defeated, and forced to retire to Africa; while the land from which they were expelled, instead of regaining complete independence, passed under the nominal rule

of the Persian king. Thus by the end of the sixth, or beginning of the seventh century no power was left within the bounds of the Arabian peninsula with sufficient strength and cohesion to present a firm front to any hostile movement or internal uprising, whether dictated by religious fanaticism or a mere lust for power and wealth.

**Mecca.**—Passing from national and political relations to those of trade and commerce, it would appear that from very early times the town of Mecca held an important position as the centre of a wide-spreading traffic and exchange. The great trade-routes in Arabia and similar regions of dry thirsty desert remain unchanged for centuries, being determined by the locality of the wells. And here converged the lines taken by the caravans of merchants from the north-east and north-west, who met and exchanged their wares with the traders from the rich and fertile districts of the south and south-east.<sup>1</sup> More important however to Mecca than

<sup>1</sup> Cp. a paper by the late Th. Bent in the *Royal Geogr. Journal*, vol. vi. p. 109 ff., on the frankincense country of Southern Arabia. He writes of "the surprising fertility of the valleys and mountains, the delicious health-giving air." . . . "Just above our camp, on the second day, water coming out of three holes in the mountain-side forms itself into a small and exquisitely beautiful lake, well stocked with duck and other



even its position as a frequented meeting-place for buying and selling, was the pre-eminence which it enjoyed as a sanctuary of religious worship, and a shrine to which pilgrims resorted from all parts of the country. Muhammad did not establish or invent the custom of making solemn pilgrimage to Mecca. It existed ages before his day, and was the chief source of the influence and fame of the city. He simply adopted an existing and popular practice into his religious system, purged it as far as he ventured or deemed it expedient to do of its heathen associations, and erected it into a pillar of the faith. But the origin of the custom lies far back in the mists of an uncertain antiquity.

**Early Religious Beliefs.** — Concerning the primitive beliefs and religious observances of these Arabian tribes much has been written, and the scattered evidence that is available enables us to draw certain general conclusions. In the first place, since the constitution of the people

water-birds . . . the encircling rocks are overhung with creepers, and covered with maidenhair and other ferns ; huge fig-trees block up the valley, the lower branches of which are full of *débris*, showing how in the rainy season this gorge must be a raging torrent ; limes, cactus, aloe, and mimosa form on all sides a delightful forest, whilst the mountains rising above the lake are clad almost to the summit with timber. Such a scene as this we never expected to witness in Arabia."

was tribal, based on family relationship broadening out into that of the clan or tribe, their religious conceptions and practices exhibit the same character as those of apparently all primitive peoples of unsettled roving habits, and are in the main, totemistic. In the course of time, however, there had grown up on this basis, partly owing to mutual intercourse, partly also under the pressure of external influences that appear to have been most active during the first few centuries of our era, a complex system of nature and animal worship, which with unimportant variations was common to the whole peninsula; a cult that revelled in the marvellous and the supernatural, which cherished superstitious rites and made much of bloody sacrifices, and which regarded it as a supreme duty to pay offerings, and to perform ceremonies at certain sacred spots. Of these holy places Mecca was the chief. And thither hosts of pilgrims travelled annually from every part of Arabia to discharge their obligations of devotion at the Ka'abah,<sup>1</sup> or sacred shrine, which stood in the midst of the city.

**Muhammad : Ancestry and Birth.**—It was here that Muhammad, whose name signifies the Praised, was born in the year 570 or 571 A.D.,

<sup>1</sup> Ka'abah, properly a die, or cube.

of the Arab tribe of the Quraish, the hereditary guardians and princely benefactors of the great temple. The privileges attached to their tribal office included the making provision for the needs of the crowds of pilgrims during their stay in the holy city, and the bearing of the standard in time of war. About a century however before the birth of Muhammad, arrangements were made by which these services, originally concentrated in the hands of the chief of the tribe, were apportioned between rival claimants; to each of whom was assigned a special office and dignity, in order to satisfy opposing demands. Hâshim, the great-grandfather of Muhammad, obtained the right and honour of giving food and drink to the pilgrims, a duty of hospitality which he is said to have exercised with royal munificence. His son, Abdul-Muttalib, gained much repute and influence by rediscovering the sacred well Zemzem, which had been choked up and forgotten for many years, and thus securing to the pilgrims a plentiful supply of pure water. This spring had, according to the tradition, miraculously flowed forth from the ground at the feet of Ishmael, when lying abandoned by his mother Hagar. It is credited by the Arabs with all manner of refreshing and curative properties, and is believed to have a

subterranean connection with a similar well in the courtyard of the great mosque at Medina.<sup>1</sup> Abdul-Muttalib had ten sons, of whom the youngest, Abdullah, became the father of Muhammad. Before the birth of the Prophet, however, his father died while absent at Medina; and the child was brought up in the desert under the care of a foster-mother of the tribe of the Beni Sad. Here he grew to manhood, engaged in the ordinary occupations of a Bedawy shepherd, and the influences by which he was thus surrounded in early life had a large share in determining his character and moulding his future course. It would seem that while very young he became subject to epileptic fits, which he taught himself, or was led to believe were due to supernatural agents and possession. Certainly there can be little doubt that he pondered deeply during these years on the problems of existence, and the needs of the people around him. While the pure air and solitude of the desert tended to confirm in him habits of austerity and moody self-introspec-

<sup>1</sup> The quality of the water is not apparently always appreciated by unbelievers. Sir Rich. Burton in his *Pilgrimage to Mecca* thus describes it:—"The flavour is a salt-bitter, much resembling an infusion of a teaspoonful of Epsom salts in a large tumbler of tepid water. . . . It is apt to cause diarrhoea and boils, and I never saw a stranger drink it without a wry face." Memorial ed., vol. ii. p. 163.

tion, which he carried with him through life. A man excitable, of strong convictions and passions, with a boundless confidence in himself and power of winning the attachment of others, profoundly imbued also with all the Arab pride of race, he was precisely the leader for whom the hour called, to stay the degeneracy of the race, and to subdue into harmony all the cross-currents of religious thought and political rivalry.

**Marriage with Khadîja.**—At the age of twenty-five, through the influence of his uncle Abu Tâlib, Muhammad was received into the household of a rich widow Khadîja, as manager or steward of her trading concerns. She subsequently, although much older than Muhammad, became his wife, and rendered him faithful and eager support through all the discouragements of his early ministry at Mecca. Two sons and four daughters were born of the marriage, of whom one only survived her father, Fâtima, the wife of Ali the fourth Khalîf, while the sons died in infancy. In Mecca Muhammad preached the doctrine of the unity of God, and heartily denounced the idolatry of his fellow-citizens, being protected by his uncle from the hostility of the men of Mecca, who disliked both his assumption of superiority, and his unsparing condemnation of their religious practices. Among

his earliest converts were his wife Khadîja, his cousin Ali, the son of Abu Tâlib, his own adopted son Zaid, and Abu Bakr, afterwards his father-in-law and the first of the Khalîfs. The Prophet therefore had honour in his own household. This fact of itself is almost decisive proof that at the beginning, whatever may have been the case in later years, Muhammad was no mere impostor, foisting on others claims and teaching which he did not himself believe.

**Early Revelations.**—The accepted tradition records that the earliest definite revelation, when visions and fancies shaped themselves for the first time into language, came to Muhammad shortly after he had reached the age of forty. Being accustomed to retire for meditation and prayer to a certain cave on Mount Hira, near Mecca, otherwise called Jebel Nûr, or Mountain of Light, he thrice heard a voice calling to him, and addressing him in the words of the 96th sûra of the Qurân :—

Recite thou in the name of the Lord who created,  
created man from clots of blood.

Recite, for thy Lord is beneficent.

It is he who hath taught to write with the pen,  
hath taught man that which he knoweth not.

The angel proceeds to enforce the duty of obedience to God, who sees and knows all; and

declares the punishment of those who refuse to listen. The voice which spoke Muhammad afterwards learnt to recognise as that of Gabriel, the archangel, commissioned by God to make known to him the truth. But for the moment he was confused and alarmed, and took counsel with his wife Khadija, who comforted him and encouraged him to believe in his own divine mission. During the two or three following years no revelation appears to have been given; and Muhammad became much cast down. Then, when he had come to the point of even meditating suicide, again the voice was heard, and the angel appeared. Hastening home he lay down, wrapt himself in his cloak, and listened to the words of the 74th sūra addressed to him by the angel:—

O thou that art covered ! arise and warn, and magnify thy Lord.

Purify thy garments, and depart from all uncleanness.

Thenceforward he believed himself to be the recipient of Divine revelations in an uninterrupted succession. These were subsequently written down, the various chapters compared and brought into harmony, and form, though by no means in chronological or any other order, the Qurân, as it is read and followed by the millions of the adherents of Islâm at the present

day. At this period Muhammad would be from forty to forty-five years of age.

**Slow Progress.**—For some time converts came slowly. In the course of four years not more than forty seem to have been gathered in. The men of Mecca looked on, if not always with active hostility, yet with a sullen dislike, which was only prevented from breaking out into open persecution by respect for the strong clan-feeling, that safeguarded the Prophet. His uncle Abu Tâlib, who had befriended him in the matter of Khadija, although at no time a believer in his teaching or claims, refused to abandon him, or to withdraw, even when pressed to do so, his countenance and protection. To have injured, therefore, or slain Muhammad would have involved his enemies in a blood-feud with the powerful family to which he belonged. There are not wanting also indications that his personal influence and standing in the city was greater than the meagre number of his adherents would suggest. The story, for example, that his aid was invoked as umpire in the rebuilding of the Ka'abah, 605 A.D., and the placing again in position of the sacred black stone, although some of the details may be due to a later desire to glorify the Prophet, points to the fact that even at that early period he was looked up to as a



man of judgement and high character for fairness and moderation.<sup>1</sup>

**Persecution and First Emigration.**—The irritation of the Quraish, however, which did not venture to touch Muhammad, displayed itself freely enough, and with impunity, towards his followers. To those accordingly who had no means of protecting themselves, and whom he was himself unable to defend, Muhammad gave permission to seek a refuge in Abyssinia. About

<sup>1</sup> “Each family of the Quraish advanced pretensions to the exclusive right of placing the stone in its future receptacle. The contention became hot, and it was feared that bloodshed would ensue. For four or five days the building was suspended. At last the Quraish again assembled on the spot amicably to decide the difficulty. Then the oldest citizen arose and said : ‘O Quraish, hearken unto me ! My advice is that the man who chanceth first to enter the court of the Ka’abah by yonder gate, he shall be chosen either to decide the difference amongst us, or himself to place the stone.’ The proposal was confirmed by acclamation, and they awaited the issue. Muhammad . . . was the first to enter. Seeing him they all exclaimed : ‘Here comes the faithful Arbiter ; we are content to abide by his decision.’ Calm and self-possessed, Muhammad . . . at once resolved upon an expedient which should conciliate them all. Taking off his mantle, and spreading it upon the ground, he placed the stone thereon, and said : ‘Now let one from each of your four divisions come forward, and raise a corner of this mantle.’ Four chiefs approached, and holding each a corner lifted thus the stone. When it had reached the proper height, Muhammad with his own hand guided it to its place.” Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, 3rd ed., p. 28 f.

a score, men and women, took advantage of the permission granted, and went into voluntary exile in the year 615 A.D. This was called the first emigration.

### **Attempted Compromise and Second Emigration.**

—Almost immediately after their departure a temporary compromise was effected by Muhammad with his opponents, the precise nature of which is obscure, although full details are given in the historical accounts.<sup>1</sup> Certain it is that on hearing of this arrangement the refugees at once returned to their own country. It seems not improbable that a real crisis is here indicated, which marks the point in the development of Muhammad's thought and conception of his own mission, at which he allowed the sternness and uncompromising character of his spiritual teaching to be tempered by more worldly motives, and a desire for political aggrandisement. If this was the case, he quickly perceived that he had gone too far. The concessions were withdrawn, and the idols together with their

<sup>1</sup> Sûra liii. of the Qurân, after vers. 19, 20, "What think ye of Lât, and of Uzza, and of Manât the third beside?" is said to have originally run, "These are exalted maidens, whose intercession verily is to be sought after." These words were subsequently withdrawn, and the present text substituted: "Verily they are but names, which ye and your fathers invented." See Sale, Koran, vol. ii. p. 174, note; Muir, p. 78 ff.

worshippers denounced with as hearty an intolerance as before. The immediate consequence was a renewal of persecution ; and a second and larger band of exiles, journeying in small parties to the number altogether of about one hundred went forth into Abyssinia. This second emigration took place within a year of the first.

**Important Conversions.**—In the same year there were won over to his side two men, whose name and influence gave a prestige to the cause of Muhammad, which hitherto it had lacked. The first was his uncle Hamza, son of Abdul-Muttalib, renowned as one of the bravest of the early Muslims ; who was slain fighting against the Meccan host at the battle of Uhud, 625 A.D. The other was Omar, afterwards father-in-law of the Prophet, and second in succession of the Khalifs. By their adhesion the band of his disciples received a considerable accession of strength. But at the same time the anger and hostility of the Quraish were aroused to deeds of greater violence.

**Interdict.**—Their hatred manifested itself in the extreme measure of an interdict, which included all the family of Muhammad as well as his followers. The interdict was enforced for two or three years, during which the Muham-

madans were confined in a single quarter of the town, all intercourse with them being forbidden. Only at the annual season of the pilgrimage were they free to come forth; and these occasions were made use of by Muhammad for preaching to the assembled crowds. At the end of this period the sentence of excommunication was removed, the practical inconveniences having been found to be very great. The Quraish were opportunely released,—so the tradition runs,—from their oath of non-intercourse by the voracity of some mice, which devoured in the Ka'abah the parchment on which the sacred vow had been engrossed.

**Deaths of Khadîja and Abu Tâlib.**—In the same year however in which the interdict was abandoned, in the early months of 620 A.D., misfortunes befell the Prophet, which threatened at first to more than counterbalance the advantage secured in his recovered freedom of movement. His wife Khadîja died, to whom he owed very much for her faithful encouragement in the dark early days of depression and ill-success, when misgivings pressed hard upon him, and the spirit of distrust both of himself and his mission. Her faith in him appears never to have wavered; and she sustained his confidence when it was ready to droop and fail. The second, and in

many respects more serious loss, was in the death of his uncle and protector, Abu Tâlib. On his deathbed the latter commended Muhammad to the care of his sons and heirs. But these appear very ill to have discharged their trust. The persecution, which had hitherto affected chiefly his followers, began from this time to fall heavily on the Prophet himself.

**Tâyif; Preaching to Jinns.**—Close upon the death of Abu Tâlib followed political trouble for Muhammad. Much as he was indebted to his wife Khadija for personal support and encouragement, it was the name and influence of Abu Tâlib that had shielded him from abuse and the persecution which had overtaken so many of his adherents. His position at Mecca seems quickly to have become almost intolerable; and he therefore initiated a new course of action by visiting the neighbouring village or town of Tâ'yif, with the object of winning over its citizens to his side, and making it the centre of his religious propaganda. The attempt was a failure, the men of Tâ'yif refusing to abandon their idols. Muhammad returned disheartened to his own city. But on the way, according to the story, as he was resting in an idol grove, the jinns came together to listen to his preaching, and he was thereby encouraged to persevere

in his mission.<sup>1</sup> Further and more substantial encouragement followed. At the ensuing annual festival in Mecca there were present some strangers from Medina, with whom Muhammad conversed, and whom he succeeded in convincing of the truth of his teaching and claims.

**Pledge of Akaba.**—These converts returned a year later, accompanied by their kinsfolk, to whom they had preached with acceptance the new faith. And a dozen men, citizens of Medina, took a secret oath of fidelity to the person of Muhammad, and of belief in the doctrine which he taught. This was called the first Pledge of Akaba,<sup>2</sup> from the name of the place where it was given.

<sup>1</sup> *Sûra* xlv. 27 : "And when we turned aside unto thee the people of the jinns to listen to the Qurân ; then when they were present at the reading of it they said, Give ear. And when it was ended, they returned to their own people, preaching unto them. They said, O our people, verily we have heard a book that has been sent down since Moses, confirming that which was before it ; it guideth into the truth, and into the right way. O our people, obey the preacher of God, and believe in him, that he may pardon you your sins, and may deliver you from a grievous punishment." Cp. also *sûra* lxxii., the "*sûra* of the jinn." See Sale, p. 205 f.

<sup>2</sup> The pledge ran as follows :—We will not worship any but one God, we will not steal, neither will we commit adultery, nor will we kill our children ; we will not slander in anywise ; and we will obey the Prophet in everything that is just.

The new disciples spent a year in instructing and making converts among their friends at home, then returned to Mecca at the next season of pilgrimage with a band of seventy-three men and two women, prepared to do homage to Muhammad, and to abide by his teaching. At a secret meeting, held on the same spot, was taken the second Pledge or Oath of Akaba, in March of the year 622 A.D. Here and now also the decision was arrived at by Muhammad and his Meccan followers to emigrate to Medina, and under the protection of his adherents there, and as it was hoped with more favourable auspices, to make that city henceforth his home, and the centre of his missionary labours.

**Flight to Medina.**—Within a few months the decision was carried out. To the number of about one hundred and fifty, those who had cast in their lot with the Prophet moved northwards in small parties, until all were gathered at Medina. Muhammad himself, with Abu Bakr and Ali, remained to the last. Around the story of his escape, when evading his enemies he finally and secretly left the city, and his concealment for three days in a cave south of Mecca, followed by a perilous journey to his new home, the pious invention of his disciples has thrown a halo of

romance and miracle, to enhance the glory of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> A mosque and houses for the use of Muhammad and his wives were built at Medina, on the spot where his camel stopped on his entrance into the city. Thus was accomplished the famous *Hijrah*, or Flight to Medina, in the summer (June 20th) of the year 622 A.D.,—a date which forms the starting-point of Muhammadan chronology all over the world. The official appointment however of the era, although it had long been in practical and habitual use, was only made seventeen years later, in the reign of the Khalif Omar.

**Medina.**—It is natural to ask what were the causes which secured for the teaching of Muhammad so favourable a reception at Medina, and that too without the personal presence of the Prophet, when all his efforts and preaching at Mecca had failed to command any large measure of success. The difference in the character and populations of the two towns accounts to a large extent, if not entirely, for

<sup>1</sup> Some of these incidents bear every mark of genuineness :—  
“Glancing upwards at a crevice (of the cave) through which the morning light began to break, Abu Bakr whispered, ‘What if one were to look through the chink, and see us underneath his very feet.’ ‘Think not thus, Abu Bakr,’ said the Prophet; ‘we are two, but God is in the midst a third.’”  
Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, p. 135.



the different result. Mecca, with its shrine of the Ka'abah, was the stronghold of idolatry; and the most powerful motives of self-interest and preservation, all the traditions of the past and hopes for the future, were bound up with the maintenance and security of its forms of worship. When he denounced there the false gods that his fellow-countrymen served, Muhammad assailed the idolatrous system in its strongest fortress, and in the face of defenders most concerned to preserve it intact. Medina however was not a sacred city, the centre of a jealous national and religious life; but one eminently cosmopolitan, the home of a wide-ranging traffic and merchandise. Lying two hundred and fifty miles north of Mecca, it was open to external influences on the side both of Persia and of the Roman Empire, from which the southern town was almost entirely secluded. Strong colonies of Jews, moreover, had been for centuries settled in the neighbourhood. And although they do not appear to have made, probably had not sought to make proselytes from the surrounding Arabian peoples, yet their example, together with even a superficial knowledge of their practices and beliefs, must have weakened the hold of idolatry, and prepared the way for a purer faith. Christianity also, to a less extent and in a debased

form, had found its way to Medina ; and Christian monks and hermits made their homes in the northern desert between Syria and Mesopotamia. In the ferment and unrest brought about by these conflicting forms of belief was presented the opportunity for the preaching of a faith which, while it combined in itself much that was best from these, clothed all in a national garb, and was proclaimed by one of their own kindred and blood. It was largely because the teaching of Muhammad appealed to their patriotism and pride of race, and offered itself in a form which all could understand, that it succeeded, where a mere foreign propaganda would have failed.

**Sources of Doctrine.**—The doctrine and system of Muhammad therefore, as they shaped themselves during these early years at Medina, contain elements borrowed or adapted from at least three external sources, besides that which he took over from the native idolatrous practices and beliefs of Arabia. From Judaism, but the Judaism rather of the Talmud than of the Old Testament. From Christianity, although a Christianity that had strayed far from the simplicity of the Gospels and of St. Paul. And from Persian Zoroastrianism, or Fire-Worship, the peculiar doctrines and cosmology of which,

while spreading far to Asia Minor and Greece, had not left neighbouring peoples untouched. Jewish influences had been on the whole the strongest. From the lips of Jewish doctors, or those who had been in contact with them, Muhammad heard the stories of the Old Testament, which he afterwards embodied, often in strangely distorted forms, in the Qurân. It is not improbable that his conception of inspiration, and of the mode of the Divine communications to himself, are derived from the same source. Above all, to Judaism he owed the stern unbending monotheism, the doctrine of the Unity and Sovereignty of God, which has been the strength of Islâm in all ages, as it was the secret of the power of Muhammad himself. To Christianity his debt was small and not easily defined, and his knowledge of its real doctrines or practices very limited. Mention is made in the Qurân of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Zacharias; Jesus Christ is frequently referred to by name as a prophet preparing the way for Muhammad, his greater successor; and his gospel is spoken of more than once. But it seems hardly possible to point to any distinctively Christian doctrine in the system of Muhammad. Perhaps the influence was rather indirect in softening the harshness and rigour of his earlier principles.

Certain it is that throughout his career he dealt more leniently with Christians than with Jews, and exhibited less intolerance towards the former than the latter. From Persia was borrowed all his representation of the Last Things, the doctrines and details of heaven and hell, of the resurrection, and of the final judgement; in part at least also his belief in the existence of spirit or jinn, and his teaching with respect to their origin character and functions. Thus it is a mistake to suppose that Islâm is the product merely of the reflecting mind of its founder. On the contrary it is an eclectic system, the various elements of which are pressed into service, and welded into a fairly consistent whole by the genius and unremitting energy of one man. If cruelty, with want of sympathy and foresight, may justly be charged to Muhammad, yet it must be conceded that he thoroughly understood his fellow-countrymen, and knew how to take advantage of the opportunity which favouring circumstances placed within his grasp.

**Advantageous Position at Medina.**—Muhammad's position then was greatly strengthened, and his chances of success increased by his removal to Medina. Instead of finding himself in the midst of a community actively and un-

compromisingly hostile to his principles and claims, he was now surrounded by men whom a wider knowledge of the world, and contact with different nationalities and creeds, had predisposed to toleration, if not to actual sympathy with the doctrines which he proclaimed. At the first he appears to have made considerable efforts and concessions, in order to win to his side the Jews. When these failed, and he became convinced that no recognition of his authority or claims was to be looked for from them, when also he found himself strong enough to dispense with their sympathy and expected support, courtesy was exchanged for invective, they were assailed with the fiercest denunciations, and experienced at his hands the most savage and violent treatment.

**Parties at Medina.**—For the first year or two subsequent to the Flight, the attention of the Prophet was fully occupied in consolidating his own position, and meeting the attacks of his enemies from Mecca. His adherents at this period in Medina, on whom he relied for support, and who were equally devoted to his person, belonged to two parties. There were the Refugees, the men who had migrated with Muhammad from Mecca, and who were termed *Muhájirín*, “emigrants” or “exiles”; and the

converts, citizens of Medina, who bore the name of *Ansâr*, or "helpers." Of both parties the numbers rapidly multiplied. In the former class were included all who subsequently joined the Muhammadan ranks from Mecca, previous to the taking of that city in the eighth year of the Hijrah. The latter embraced all the inhabitants of Medina, when these became, at least nominally, Muslims.

**Warfare with the Quraish.** — The first move against the Quraish at Mecca was made by Muhammad himself. It would seem that the old Arab predatory instinct was actively working within him, joined with a desire for revenge on his persecutors. Perhaps also there was added the politic aim of giving his followers something to do, in order to occupy their thoughts and hands. Certainly he planned more than one marauding expedition against the rich Meccan caravans that took the route northwards into Syria, passing between Medina and the sea. On the last of these occasions, in the second year of the Flight, Muhammad himself went forth to surprise a caravan led by Abu Sufyân, his former inveterate opponent at Mecca, and a leading man among the Quraish. The caravan succeeded in evading the attack; but an army sent from Mecca to its aid met the Muslims in

battle, and was defeated. This was the fight of *Badr*, so called from the spot near Medina where it took place,—the first of the many engagements in which the Muhammadans, by their impetuous bravery and fanatic devotion, carried the day against superior numbers of their opponents. Hostilities continued between Mecca and Medina for some years, with varying fortune. The chief dates and events are the battle of Uhud, fought in the beginning of the year 625 A.D., within three miles of Medina, when the Muslim army was routed, Muhammad himself wounded, and Hamza his best warrior slain. The war of the Fosse, or Ditch, followed two years later, in which Medina itself was besieged by the forces of the Quraish, in alliance with a Jewish tribe or tribes belonging to the neighbourhood. The attack was successfully repulsed; and after the departure of the Quraish a cruel vengeance was inflicted on the Jews, who were induced or compelled to surrender at discretion. The men, to the number of about eight hundred, were put to death, the women and children sold into slavery, with the exception of one Jewish girl whom Muhammad reserved for himself for a wife.

**Attempt to Visit Mecca.**—In the sixth year of the Hijrah, the spring of 628 A.D., at the time

of the annual pilgrimage, Muhammad, accompanied by a large number of his followers, set out for Mecca, with the intention of performing the usual ceremonies at the sacred shrine, from which he had now for so long been excluded. He appears to have thought that the truce of arms, scrupulously observed by all the Arab tribes at this season, would ensure him freedom from molestation ; or that if the Quraish violated the truce by attacking him, they would put themselves manifestly in the wrong in the eyes of all the neighbouring clans, and thus give him an undoubted advantage over them. If he really anticipated a free and unobstructed entrance into Mecca, he soon found himself mistaken. The Quraish assembled in arms to bar his approach, and in spite of all diplomacy remained firm in their purpose not to suffer the Prophet or his adherents to set foot in the holy city. After some negotiation a truce was agreed upon for ten years, the chief conditions of which were that Muhammad should at once withdraw, together with his people, but be permitted to return the following year, and remain then for three days within the limits of the sacred territory ; and that during the truce full liberty should be accorded to the adherents of either party, being of full age, to join the other. It



was the first occasion on which the Quraish had treated with Muhammad, as with an equal and independent power; and marked therefore a great advance in the recognition of his political, if not of his spiritual claims. The latter were to be adequately and completely acknowledged at a subsequent time. Meanwhile it may well have been that the encouragement and importance accruing from this success were strong among the influences which urged him, within the next two or three years, to send messengers to the princes and rulers of the surrounding kingdoms, including Heraclius, Emperor of Constantinople, summoning them to embrace the religion of Islâm, and to acknowledge himself as the Prophet of God. The treaty was named, from the spot where it was negotiated, the treaty of *Hudaibiyah*.

**Pilgrimage.**—In the following year, according to the agreement, Muhammad was allowed to perform unmolested all the ceremonies of the annual pilgrimage, entering Mecca with a large body of adherents numbering about two thousand; while the Quraish abandoned for the time their city and homes, and from the surrounding hills watched his proceedings. These early years of the truce moreover, when there was peace with the Quraish, were utilised by

Muhammad for extending his authority by force of arms in the districts around Medina. But within a short period, in 630 A.D., an alleged infraction of the treaty gave him an excuse for marching against Mecca itself, of which he was not slow to take advantage.

**Taking of Mecca.**—The details of the attack that followed are not very clear. Treachery seems to have been at work within the city. Abu Sufyân, hitherto his principal opponent, made his submission; and Mecca was taken with but slight opposition. It must have been a striking scene, when Muhammad with his devoted troops entered as conqueror the city which eight years before had cast him forth as an exile. The army entered in four divisions from the four sides, meeting at the sacred temple in the midst of the city. Thither Muhammad himself proceeded, and took his stand at the entrance to the Ka'abah, while the idols around, to the number according to the tradition of three hundred and sixty, were one by one at his command hewn to the ground.<sup>1</sup> The sacred character of the temple itself was confirmed,

<sup>1</sup> He is said to have pointed with his staff to each of the idols in succession, reciting the verse from the Qurân :—"Truth is come, and falsehood vanisheth away; verily falsehood is vanished away." Sûra xvii. 83.

and its rights and privileges safeguarded ; but it was henceforth to be devoted to the worship of the one only God. Muhammad himself conducted the prayers for the first time according to the Muslim ritual as practised at Medina. And the form of service then instituted has been observed without interruption to the present day.

To the Meccans themselves, with but few exceptions, Muhammad granted a free pardon, on condition that they should make to him their submission, and should adopt the religion of Islâm. The condition was accepted without demur, the entire population became converts, and the city was thus changed from a stronghold of heathen worship into the sacred religious centre of the new faith. To his own tribe especially, the Quraish, the Prophet showed great favour,—a course of action which was the occasion of some murmuring among his earlier adherents at Medina. From the taking of Mecca therefore, and the conversion of its citizens, may be dated the ascendancy of this tribe in the counsels and history of Islâm. The prince and head of the Muhammadan faith, though he may dwell elsewhere than at Mecca or Medina, must by the letter of the law be descended from the Quraish.

**Rapid Extension.**—The remaining years of the life of Muhammad were marked by no event of equal importance with the capture of Mecca. They were however years of unbroken prosperity and extension abroad. His authority was established over practically the whole of Arabia, Christians and Jews alone refusing to acknowledge his claims as the Prophet of God; and these were allowed to remain in a position of inferiority and subjection, paying tribute and enjoying protection, but forbidden to approach the holy city and the Ka'abah, or to build new houses of prayer, although permission was given to repair old churches or synagogues that were in danger of falling. Among the places subdued at this period was the town of Tâ'yif, to the citizens of which Muhammad had made his unsuccessful appeal more than eight years before. The first besieging force, led by the Prophet in person, was compelled to retire. But the inhabitants, after an interval of ten months, pressed by the attacks of the tribes around, sent to him ambassadors, who agreed to the terms imposed. These conditions included the immediate destruction of their famous idol-goddess *Lât*, or *Allât*, and the acceptance by the people of the principles of Islâm. Tâ'yif was the last place of any importance in Arabia to hold out against

Muhammad.<sup>1</sup> Expeditions were also sent against the Greeks, but met with no success. And one of the last acts of the Prophet's life was to organize a fresh campaign against these enemies on a larger scale; an undertaking which it fell to the lot of his successors to carry through, and which was the prelude to many centuries of warfare, ending in the taking of Constantinople, and establishment of the Muhammadan power in Europe.

**Last Pilgrimage.**—In the spring of the following year, the tenth of the Hijrah, 630 A.D., Muhammad presided in person for the last time over the ceremonies of the annual pilgrimage, carrying out himself with great exactness all the appropriate rites and observances in order, for an example to his followers for all time.

**Death of Muhammad.**—Shortly after his return to Medina there came upon him an attack of fever and sickness, which he is said to have attributed to some poisoned food eaten by him years before, from the effects of which he never entirely recovered. For two or three weeks the illness increased upon him; during the later part of which time, when himself too

<sup>1</sup> Muir calls attention also to the fact that it seems to have been the only place where the destruction of the idols occasioned any regret. *Life*, p. 437.

weak to conduct public prayers, he deputed Abu Bakr, his father-in-law, to take his place, thus designating him as his successor. The illness proved fatal. And on the eighth of June, 632 A.D., exactly ten years after his flight from Mecca, in the chamber of Ayesha, his young and favourite wife, with his head lying on her bosom, the great Prophet of Arabia passed away. His grave was dug within the house on the spot where he had died; and there his body was laid to rest, amid the expressed sorrow and respect, beyond a doubt for the most part genuine, of his numerous followers.<sup>1</sup>

**First Four Khalîfs.**—The first four successors of Muhammad in the government, political and

<sup>1</sup> Tradition records that the Angel of Death came to Muhammad to ask leave to take his soul, having never sought permission before from any mortal. Muhammad consented. Gabriel also came to bid him farewell. “‘Peace be on thee,’ he said, ‘O Prophet of the Lord! This is the last time that I shall tread the earth; with this world I have now concern no longer.’ So the Prophet died; and there arose a wailing of celestial voices, (the sound was audible, but no form was seen), saying; ‘Peace be on you, ye inhabitants of this house, and mercy from the Lord, and his blessing. Every soul shall taste death,’” etc. Cp. Muir, *Life*, p. 479 f.

religious, of the Muslim world were elected by popular vote, and made no attempt to found hereditary dynasties. They are known as the four orthodox Khalîfs, or the great *Imâms*, the latter word signifying "leader" or "teacher." Their names in order are Abu Bakr, Omar, Othmân, and Ali, the first two being fathers-in-law of the Prophet, the others his sons-in-law.

**Abu Bakr.**—The rule of Abu Bakr lasted for only two years, and his care was mainly directed to the consolidating of positions already won, and the execution of projects formed before the death of Muhammad himself. It was a time, as would naturally be expected, of internal regulation and settlement, rather than of activity and extension abroad. When Muhammad died, his authority was nowhere acknowledged beyond the confines of Arabia; although he had himself, as we have seen, begun to look outside, and had called upon foreign princes to admit his claims, and accept the newly-established religion. Almost immediately, however, under his successors began that marvellous series of Arab conquests, which came within a little of carrying the arms and faith of Islâm to the limits of the known world. Chaldæa and Persia in the north-east, Palestine and Syria on the north, Egypt on the west, were

the first to feel the weight of the Muslim power.

Omar.—Abu Bakr died in 634 A.D., the only one of the four early Khalîfs who was suffered to go down to his grave in peace. When Omar succeeded him, the countries of Chaldæa and Syria had already been entered by the Muhammadan armies. In the same year a great battle was fought at Wakusa, on the Yarmuk, where the troops of Heraclius, the Emperor of the Greeks, were defeated with great slaughter. By this victory the way was opened to Damascus, which city was assaulted and captured in the following summer, 635 A.D.; and it has ever since remained under Muhammadan domination. Antioch and Jerusalem were taken in the following year; and the Khalîf Omar himself journeyed to Palestine to receive in person from the Patriarch the submission of the last-named city. There also he laid the foundation of the famous mosque of Omar, which covers the rock that is believed to bear the mark of Muhammad's foot, imprinted on the hard surface as he started to return from Jerusalem to Mecca on his miraculous night journey. In the east, the two great battles of Kâdisîya on the Euphrates in 635 A.D., and Nahâwand in Persia six years after-



wards, the latter followed by the taking of the capital Persepolis and flight of the king Yezdegird, laid all Persia at the feet of the Khalîf. Egypt was overrun and conquered in the same year.

Omar was assassinated by a Persian slave, for some fancied wrong or refusal of redress, in the mosque at Medina, towards the close of the year 644 A.D. His reign had lasted for ten and a half years, and had been marked by great wisdom moderation and success.

**Othmân.**—His successor was Othmân, a man of a very different character. Weak and injudicious, as ignorant of the art of ruling as of that of yielding, although pious and faithful in the discharge of that which he believed to be his duty, he appears to have been little more than a tool in the hands of ambitious members of the Quraish. A spirit of discontent spread rapidly in the provinces, not only amongst the numerous half-converted peoples, whose profession of Islâm was a mere cloak for love of warfare and plunder, but with those also by whom the innovations and foreign practices that had crept in were in all sincerity regarded as proofs of a fatal degeneracy. The latter party consisted of bands of fanatics, present in greater or less numbers throughout the whole

dominion of Islâm, but with their headquarters in the districts bordering on the Euphrates; and their friendship and enmity were alike dangerous. A wide-spreading conspiracy was formed, the object of which was to secure by fair means or foul the dethronement of the Khalîf, in order to instal a stronger or more pliant ruler in his place. The spirit of revolt was fostered by many of the leading men in the provincial cities. Formidable bands of conspirators made their appearance in Medina, with lists of grievances for which they demanded redress. Othmân put them off with promises of consideration and justice. They were persuaded to retire from the city; but quickly retraced their steps on the pretext that a messenger had been captured, bearing an order from the Khalîf to the provincial governors that the chief men of the conspiracy should be put to death immediately on their return home. The entire charge and complaint against Othmân was without doubt false, and a part of the plot. But it served to inflame the animosity of the common people, and gave an excuse for offering violence to the aged Khalîf, on whose abdication or death his enemies had fully determined. The palace in which he lived at Medina was besieged in regular form for several weeks, being

guarded by a few faithful followers. These were at length overcome or thrust aside, the walls stormed, and Othmân himself at the age of eighty-two slain in the courtyard, while engaged in reading in a copy of the Qurân, on the 17th of June, 656 A.D.

Ali and Mu'âwiya. — At the time of the murder of Othmân, Mu'âwiya, the son of Abu Sufyân the great Meccan chief and early opponent of Muhammad, was governor of Syria and Damascus in the name of the Khalîf. He refused to recognise as the latter's successor Ali, the husband of Fâtima, Muhammad's favourite daughter, whom the inhabitants of Medina had elected in the room of Othmân. For some years, therefore, until the death of Ali, the Muhammadan empire was distracted by civil war between the Syrian adherents of Mu'âwiya, who represented the party of laxity and progress, and the men of Arabia and Chaldæa, who professed to uphold the stricter principles of early Islâm, and who partly followed Ali and partly compelled him to do their bidding. The new Khalîf abandoned the turbulent city of Medina, and fixed his capital at Kûfa, on the west of the Euphrates, south of and not far from ancient Babylon, a more suitable and central spot for the control of a wide empire. The choice however proved un-

fortunate to him and to his house, through the fickle and untrustworthy character of the men of the city. From Kûfa Ali advanced against Mu'âwiya with an army largely composed of fanatics, who cared nothing for his person, but all for what they held to be the principles and rules of the faith. The turning-point of the campaign that ensued was the battle fought in the summer of 657 A.D. at Siffîn, near the right bank of the Euphrates above its junction with the Khabûr, some four hundred miles north-west of Kûfa. Here the troops of Ali were on the point of winning a decisive victory, when their opponents adopted the device of fastening copies of the Qurân to their lances, shouting out that the Book of the Law should decide between them. The fanatics of Ali's army thereupon refused to fight against the sacred volume, and withdrew from the contest. An agreement was come to that the claims of the rival leaders should be submitted to arbitration; and this by a shallow trick was so managed as to go in favour of Mu'âwiya.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The chosen umpires, one from each side, met in the early part of 658 A.D. at Dûma, mid-way between the Gulf of Akaba and the head of the Persian Gulf. The details of the event are uncertain, and the accounts given not always consistent. It was arranged between the two commissioners that both claimants to the Khalîfate should be set aside, and a third impartial candidate chosen. Abu Mûsa, accordingly, as spokesman for Ali, declared

Ali retired to his capital at Kûfa; and the practical effect of the arbitration was *nil*. There he was assassinated in the mosque, at the beginning of the year 661 A.D., by one of a band of three fanatics who had sworn to rid the Muslim world of its three tyrants, Ali, Mu'âwiya, and 'Amrû the general who had won Egypt for Islâm, had acted as arbitrator on the side of Mu'âwiya three years before, and who was regarded as his probable successor. The plot against 'Amrû and Mu'âwiya failed, and Ali alone fell. He had been one of the first to believe in Muhammad, had faithfully stood by him through all the dark days at Mecca and the brighter experiences of Medina, then rendered loyal service to his successors, until himself called upon to assume the highest office. He was not however strong enough to control the harsh and hot spirits whom he found under him; nor is he free from the suspicion of complicity in the murder of Othmân. That it lay in his power to do more than he even attempted for the protection of the aged Khalîf is clear. In his later years also he

his leader deposed, and the throne vacant. 'Amrû, following him, on the part of Mu'âwiya announced that as Ali was no longer Khalîf by the act of his own umpire, and Mu'âwiya therefore the only claimant in the field, he confirmed him in the position of Khalîf, and ordered that all the people should render him obedience.

certainly preferred his own ease to the labours and duties of an empire divided against itself between rival factions and interests. But Ali was more true to the simplicity and purity of the early faith than nine-tenths of the men who surrounded him, and filled his days with bitterness. In less troublous times he would have made a wise and successful ruler of the Muhammadan world.

**Hasan and Husain.**—Ali left two sons, Hasan and Husain, of whom the eldest, Hasan, was chosen by the people of Kûfa to succeed his father as Khalîf. It would seem however that he desired a life of indulgence, with the pleasures of the harem, rather than the troubles of sovereignty; and after a few months he abdicated in favour of Mu'âwiya, withdrawing to Medina, where he was poisoned eight years subsequently by one of his wives. Husain went to live at Mecca; whence in the Khalîfate of Yazîd, son and successor of Mu'âwiya, he was enticed by promises of support from the men of Kûfa in an attempt to throw off the Syrian yoke. Marching from Mecca with a small band of adherents, he found himself betrayed and disappointed of the expected help from Kûfa. And at Karbalâ, west of the Euphrates, not far distant from Babylon, he and his company

were finally surrounded by the horsemen of the Khalîf.

**Death of Husain.**—The story of the death of Husain has often been told. The attack of his enemies began at dawn, and was sustained till past noon ; when all his followers being scattered or slain, and Husain himself wounded, he sat down on the ground with his little son Abdullah on his knees. The child was at once killed by an arrow ; and Husain, laying down the body, said, "We come from God, and we return to Him. O God, give me strength to bear these misfortunes." His foes then closed in upon him and slew him. It was the second great and premeditated murder of Islâm ; and the cruel death of the grandson of the Prophet on the plains of Karbalâ has been the cause of the bitterest and most implacable schism that her history has known.<sup>1</sup> The head of Husain was cut off, and carried to the Khalîf's governor at Kûfa. The battle, or massacre, took place on the tenth of Muharram, the first month of the Muhammadan year, A.H. 61, equivalent to Oct. 10th, 680 A.D. Husain is regarded as a martyr by the Shî'ah sect of the Muslims, who reverence

<sup>1</sup> "The 'martyred Husain' is a watchword which has kept alive a spirit of hatred and of vengeance even to this day." Sell, *Faith of Islâm*.

him and his father with a passionate devotion. The memory of his name and fate is kept alive on the anniversary of his death by the yearly festival of the Muharram, with services and processions and lamentation.<sup>1</sup>

**Umayyad Khalifs.**—The Khalîfs who reigned at Damascus, fourteen in number, are termed *Umayyads*, from *Umayya* the great-grandfather of Mu'âwiya. The dynasty lasted for nearly a century, until the year 750 A.D. At its close the Muhammadan arms had been carried in the west throughout North Africa and Spain, together with parts of Southern France, where the Arab conquest and infusion of Arab blood is still attested by many place and folk-names, and by the features of the population. While in the east Bokhara and Samarkand with the surrounding country had been brought into subjection, Afghânistân overrun, and the forces of the Khalîf had even crossed the Indus. North of Palestine and Syria no great progress

<sup>1</sup> It has been said more than once that in the death of Husain Islâm, or at least the Shî'ah sect, endeavours to meet and satisfy the longing of the human heart for an example of self-sacrifice and an atonement for sin. Muhammad is reported to have foretold his martyrdom:—"He will die for the sake of my people." Words of Husain also, uttered before he started on his last expedition, are handed down by tradition:—"How can I forget my people, seeing that I am about to offer myself for their sakes." Cp. Sell, p. 94.



had been made, or permanent conquest effected. Frequent invading expeditions however had entered and laid waste Armenia and Asia Minor, the nearest provinces had been definitely occupied, and Constantinople itself more than once besieged. The conquest of India and of Central and Western Africa was not achieved until a later date.

**Abbâsid Khalîfs.**—The Umayyads were succeeded in the year 750 A.D. by the dynasty of the *Abbâsids*; who received the name from their ancestor *Abbâs*, uncle of the Prophet. These founded a new capital at Baghdâd on the banks of the Tigris, where under the Khalîfs *Harûn-ar-Rashîd*, who reigned from 786–809 A.D., and whose name is well known from the *Arabian Nights*, and *Ma'mûn*, 813–833 A.D., the great free-thinker of Islâm, the power and luxury of the Khalîfate reached its highest point, and arts and sciences borrowed from the Greeks were diligently cultivated. Externally, matters were not so prosperous; the provinces one by one fell away from the control of the central authority at Baghdâd, the most distant being naturally the earliest to assert their freedom. In Spain the Abbâsids were never recognised, and a branch Umayyad dynasty held independent rule from the very first at Cordova. North Africa, Egypt,

Syria successively cut themselves off from the dominion of the Khalîf, his spiritual authority nevertheless being always acknowledged except in Morocco and Spain. A similar course of events was pursued in the East, where the more remote provinces of Persia, and the countries on the farther bank of the Oxus, became practically independent under Muhammadan governors. From the ninth and tenth centuries onwards bands of Turks and other savage mercenaries, originally introduced as bodyguards to the Khalîfs, more and more usurped all real power, the nominal rulers sinking into the position of mere puppets in the hands of all-powerful *viziers*. Later still, Mongol hordes poured down upon the empire from Central Asia, Baghdâd was taken by their armies under Hulâgu in 1258 A.D., and the last of the Abbâsid Khalîfs died in prison.

**The Khalîfs in Egypt.**—A branch of the same family maintained a precarious position of independent authority in Egypt down to the year 1517 A.D., when the country was taken possession of by the Ottoman Sultân, Salîm I. The last sovereign descended from the tribe of the Quraish, who bore the title of Khalîf, was carried prisoner to Constantinople, and there compelled to hand over his rights and dignity to the conqueror. The Sultans of Turkey, therefore, can

only rest their claim to the name and office of Khalif, or supreme ruler of the Muhammadan world, on the right of the sword. According to the strict law of Islâm, they are not and cannot be true successors of Muhammad, not being of the tribe of the Quraish.<sup>1</sup>

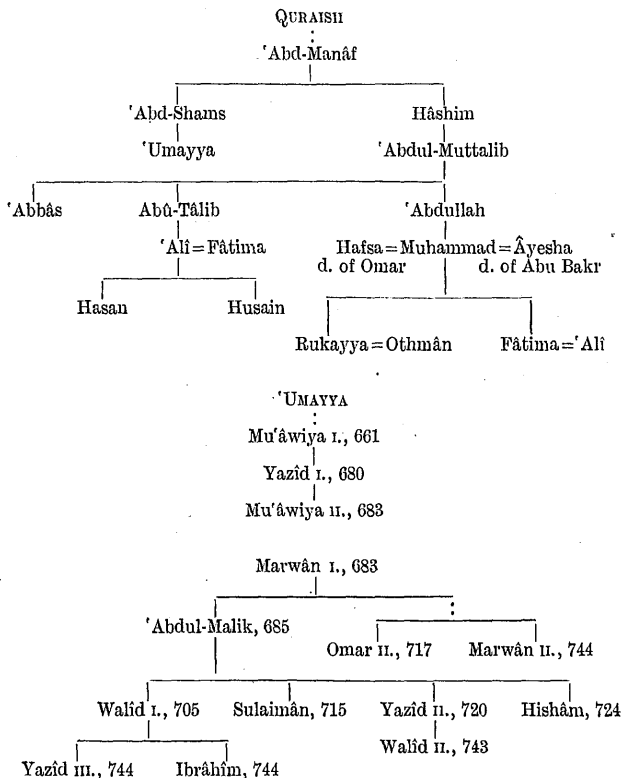
**Muhammadan Conquest of India.**—The subjugation of India was never seriously undertaken by the Muhammadans under the Khalîfate. As early however as the seventh and eighth centuries expeditions both by land and sea made their way to the countries lying on the Indus, and effected settlements that became more or less permanent. But the real founder of Musalmân dominion in India was Mahmûd of Ghazni; who at the beginning of the eleventh century invaded Kashmîr and the Panjâb, fixing his capital at Lahore, and opening the way to further advance. In the northern part of the peninsula his successors and descendants carried on the work which he had well begun, establishing at Delhi and throughout Bengal a number of dynasties and kingdoms, and pushing southwards along the sea-coasts into the Deccan; there to repeat on a smaller scale the same process of adventurous conquest and creation of new Muhammadan states out of the ruin of older

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sell, p. 104 ff.

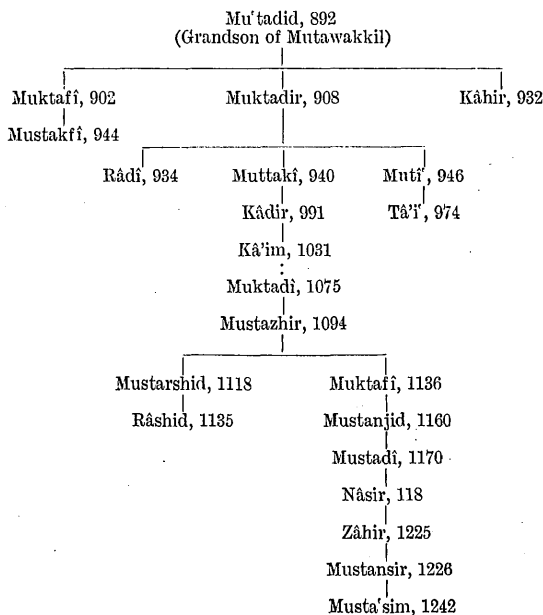
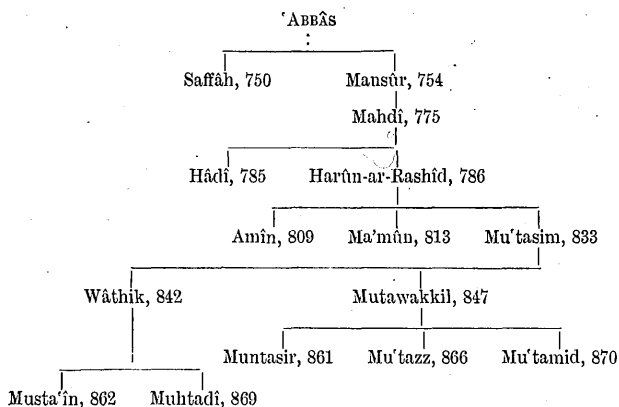
powers. The whole was consolidated, and brought gradually and for the most part under one rule, by the Mongol conquerors from the north; the first of whom, Bâbar, entered India in 1525. The line of the Mughal emperors continued to rule, with ever-shrinking dominions, until 1858; when their authority, long nominal, was finally superseded by that of the Queen-Empress at the close of the Great Mutiny.

NOTE.

\* \* The connection by Muhammadan law is so close between Church and State, the temporal ruler and the spiritual head, that it has seemed worth while to add tables of the family of Muhammad himself, and of the dynasties of the Khalîfs. They are taken in the main from *The Mohammedan Dynasties* of Stanley Lane-Poole, London, 1894.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> | signifies direct descent; : an interval of one or more generations. The number after a name is the date of accession A.D.



# THE QURÂN





## THE QURÂN

THE great work of Muhammad's lifetime, apart although of course inseparable from his public activities, was the Qurân, the book in which are contained his teaching and directions on all matters of faith and practice.

**The Qurân Eternal and Uncreated.**—By orthodox Musalmâns the Qurân is believed to be uncreated and eternal, of incomparable excellence and beauty, the unapproachable pattern for all time of what an inspired composition should be. Abû Hanîfah, one of the most famous and authoritative expounders of Muhammadan law, says concerning it, "The Qurân is the word of God, and is His inspired word and revelation. It is a necessary attribute of God. It is not God, but still it is inseparable from God. It is written in a volume, it is read in a language, it is remembered in the heart, and its letters and its vowel-points and its writing are all created, for these are the works of man; but God's word is uncreated. Its words, its writing, its

letters, and its verses are for the necessities of man, for its meaning is arrived at by their use ; but the word of God is fixed in the essence of God, and he who says that the word of God is created is an infidel." As we shall see, this question of the nature of the Qurân, its supposed eternity and uncreated character, was at one period in the history of Islâm most keenly debated between the orthodox doctors and the free-thinkers of the day, who claimed the right of testing even the inspired word in the light of reason and experience.

**Style.** — To a European, approaching the Qurân for the first time through the medium of a translation, the book simply appears beyond measure wearisome and dull ; and his marvel is excited that a work so full of platitudes and repetitions, of idle tales and legends, interspersed with bits of unedifying history from the life of its author, in parts at least so tame and prosaic, should have stirred the admiration and commanded the reverence of the millions of Musalmâns down to the present day. The Qurân has been and is read and studied as no other book, with the possible exception of the Christian Scriptures, has ever been. Some scholars would refuse to make an exception even of the New Testament. In deprecation of a judgement,

which certainly errs in the direction of severity, it may perhaps be said that scarcely any other work suffers so much in translation. It is written in Arabic,—a language that lends itself to high-flown sentiment, to discursiveness and repetition,—and for an Eastern people, with whom colouring and form are of greater concern than substance or depth of thought. It is moreover composed throughout in a kind of rhythmical prose, which, although it fetters somewhat and limits the writer, yet possesses a real dignity and beauty of its own, which it is beyond the power of any translation to reproduce. On a smaller scale similar rhythmical effects are met with in many of the Hebrew Psalms, and in passages from the prophets; or again in a somewhat different manner in Anglo-Saxon alliterative poetry. Nothing exists in the Qurân approaching to metre, or the measured succession of accented and unaccented sounds. But the final syllables of a clause, a sentence, or a verse are so contrived as to be identical both in the vowels and in the consonants; with the result that the voice of the reader or reciter dwells at each pause or sub-pause upon the same combination of sounds, producing an impression of regularity and solemn dignity unattainable perhaps by any but an Oriental. The difficulties

of an intelligent appreciation of the work are also enhanced by the circumstance that, as ordinarily printed, the chapters are not arranged in chronological order, or indeed on any principle that would help to make clear their meaning. It is moreover only fair to add that the few European scholars who have had the perseverance and courage to essay the consecutive reading of the Qurân for a second or third time have uniformly, as far as my knowledge goes, described the impression made upon themselves as one of increasing force and permanence. Nor is a European always, perhaps he is very rarely a competent judge of what would be likely to favourably influence or impress an Oriental mind.

**Name and Inspiration.**—The name Qurân is derived from the Arabic verb *qara'a*, to read, Heb. קרא, and therefore signifies that which is or should be read. Compare the Hebrew noun קריאה in Neh. viii. 8, translated in our English version the "reading." The book is believed to have been sent down by God complete to the lowest heaven on the *Laylatu'l Qadr*, or "night of power," the twenty-seventh of the sacred month Ramadân, the month of the great fast; and to have been thence communicated to Muhammad in detail from time to time by the

angel Gabriel, as occasion required.<sup>1</sup> It follows therefore that not only the teaching and the substance, but the very form and letters of the text are inspired, that its words are the actual words of God Himself. A distinction is usually made between the mode and degree of inspiration possessed by the Prophet when delivering the Qurân, and that which he enjoyed at other times. The former is *wahî*; and Muhammad was then a mere passive instrument or channel, through whom the dictated words of God were made known. The latter is *ilhâm*, and is conceded by Musalmâns to other prophets besides Muhammad, as for example to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ. In this case the substance of the teaching only is from God, the form in which it is delivered is due to the moulding and character of the man through whom the communication is sent. In the Qurân itself therefore there is no place for, and no possibility of a human element. The work is perfect, all-sufficient, and wholly divine. It is also, according to the decisions of the orthodox doctors, uncreated and eternal. This view however has been much disputed, and has given rise to prolonged and bitter argu-

<sup>1</sup> Cp. sûra ii. 91 : "Verily he (Gabriel) caused it to descend on thy heart by the permission of God, confirming that which was before revealed, a direction and glad tidings to the believers."

mentation ; it appears also to date not from the time of Muhammad himself, but from the second or third century after the Hijrah, and to have been due to the exigencies of theological controversy.

**Delivery and Preservation.**—The precepts and chapters of the Qurân were orally delivered by Muhammad at intervals in the course of his ministry both at Mecca and Medina. At first it would seem that no special pains were taken, either by the Prophet himself or his followers, to record these utterances. Muhammad indeed, as far as we know, never actually committed anything to writing. And it has even been maintained, although on no sufficient grounds, that he was wholly illiterate. After a time however his disciples adopted the practice of writing down at least some of the sayings of their leader, instead of trusting wholly to memory. The result was that after the death of Muhammad there were found among the Companions, or earliest adherents of the Prophet, not only men who knew by heart the entire Qurân, but also some who were in possession of chapters or extracts in a written form. It was not long, however, before the danger of a total loss or dispersion of the sacred text forced itself upon the attention of the responsible heads of the

community; when, owing to the numerous battles in which the Muhammadans were engaged, many of these Companions and Reciters of the Qurân were slain. The initiative in an endeavour to meet the danger appears to have been taken by Omar; who urged upon the Khalîf Abu Bakr the importance of making a collection, and issuing an authoritative edition of all the known utterances of the Prophet. The work was entrusted to Zaid ibn Thâbit, a native of Medina, who had been Muhammad's favourite amanuensis. He accordingly gathered together the scattered chapters of the Qurân "from date-leaves, and tablets of white stone, and from the breasts of men"; and the Qurân, as it exists to-day, is the fruit of his efforts. Unfortunately the chapters thus collected were not arranged in chronological order, but apparently on a rough principle of length, the longest being placed first and the shorter at the end. Since the brief sayings were, generally speaking, the earliest in point of date, it results from this that the Qurân would be more intelligible, as someone has said, if it were read backwards. Probably it would have been found impossible at that time to determine with precision the order in which the various discourses were delivered, had the attempt been made. Nor is it even certain

that the actual division into chapters, with their appropriate headings, was made by Muhammad himself, and was not rather a mere accident of the compilation. In some cases it appears certain that the utterances belonging to different periods of his life have been strung together; and on the other hand words and passages have become separated, which were originally spoken on one and the same occasion.

**Second Recension.**—Into this first collection or recension differences of reading soon began to find their way. The number of these variations again excited alarm, and by the reign of the Khalîf Othmân they had so increased that a fresh revision became necessary. Othmân charged Zaid a second time with the task, associating with him three members of the Quraish, to whom he was to defer in all cases of dispute as to reading or pronunciation; the object of this regulation apparently being to secure that the Qurân should be read only in the pure dialect of Mecca. When the revision was complete, all other copies were by command of the Khalîf destroyed, and thus one authorised text was established for the whole of Islâm. Four standard copies were written out, and placed in the four principal towns of Medina, Damascus, Kûfa, and Basrah; and from these



all existing copies, without exception, are descended. For the preservation and accurate transmission of the text elaborate provision was made. An intricate science of writing and copying the Qurân came into existence, to which is due the maintenance of the text intact and its safe keeping, free from any but the most insignificant various readings, during nearly thirteen centuries. There is no good reason to doubt that we possess the text of the Qurân to-day practically in the form in which it left the lips of Muhammad. The Shi'ahs indeed accuse the orthodox Sunnis of having suppressed verses favourable to the claims of Ali.<sup>1</sup> But it seems clear that had such verses really existed, and formed a recognised part of the Qurân, their omission from Othmân's text could not fail to have been detected by some one or other of the numerous partisans of Ali then living.

**Form and Contents.**—The Qurân then, as it has come into our hands, and as it was finally settled in the reign of the third Khalîf, consists of one hundred and fourteen chapters, technically

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, "Ali is of the number of the pious ; we shall give him his right in the day of judgement ; we shall not pass over those who wish to deceive him. We have honoured him above all this family. He and his family are very patient. Their enemy (*i.e.* Mu'âwiya) is the chief of sinners." Cp. Sell, p. 12 f.

called *sûras*,<sup>1</sup> of very various lengths. Many of these *sûras* are probably composite, that is to say belong in part to different periods of the Prophet's life. Each chapter is named from its opening letters or words, or from some prominent topic or event treated of therein; as was the case for instance with the Hebrew names of the books of the Pentateuch. Thus there is found the *sûra* of Women (4th), of Prophets (21st), or of the Resurrection (75th). All the *sûras* moreover, with the exception of the ninth, that of Repentance, are introduced by the formula, "In the name of God the compassionate the merciful." Throughout God Himself is represented as the speaker; or rather Gabriel, as conveying the messages and commands of God. The same monotonous rhythmical style also is everywhere maintained, whether the theme be matters of moral and spiritual obligation, or the most prosaic details of what passes for history. The more prolix *sûras* belong generally to the later period of Muhammad's life; and an arrangement by length, beginning with the shortest chapters, would roughly correspond with the chronological order of delivery. Attempts at such an arrangement have been made by Muslim writers themselves. Jalâlu'd - Dîn, a

<sup>1</sup> Late Hebrew שורה, a row or series; cp. שורה, Isa. xxviii. 25.

famous Muhammadan doctor, who lived about two and a half centuries after the Hijrah and composed a commentary on the Qurân, elaborated a scheme which has been in its main features and disposition approved by European scholars. He assigns the first place in point of date to the xcviith sūra, that of Congealed Blood. Last in the order is the sūra of Repentance. The arrangement adopted by Th. Nöldeke in his *Geschichte d. Qurâns* is generally considered to be the most satisfactory; and is followed on the whole by J. M. Rodwell in his English translation.

**Medina Sûras.**—It is not in general difficult to distinguish on internal evidence the sûras delivered at Medina from those of earlier date. For in this town the position of Muhammad was more assured than at Mecca. He was now the head of an acknowledged party, charged with the duty of providing for them legislation and instruction, as well as of rebutting the accusations and calumnies to which he and they were alike exposed. This difference of position is reflected in his utterances. At Mecca he is the indignant fiery preacher, overflowing with wrath against his idolatrous opponents, and threatening them with all manner of calamity and evil because of their refusal to believe in him as the heaven-

sent teacher, the apostle of God. At Medina, with few and slight exceptions, he is the calm legislator, securely occupying a position already won and intent only on making the best use of his victory. The later sūras besides being longer are quieter in tone, seem to be less spontaneous, more laboured and artificial, and concern themselves to a greater degree with abstract theological questions, and with the enactment of ceremonial and civil laws. Appeals to and denunciations of the Jews are frequent, while references to idolatry and the Quraish occur but seldom. Historical notices also are found, which serve to date within narrow limits the portions or chapters in which they stand. On the whole there is little dispute as to the parts of the Qurân revealed at Medina; and twenty chapters, including all the longest, are usually assigned to this period.

**Meccan Sūras.**—In the Meccan sūras also a certain progression may be traced both in style and matter. Some approximate in character to the passages and discourses spoken at Medina, and are probably the latest in point of time, dating from no long period before the Hijrah. Others, a smaller class, are characterized by a vigour and directness, a heartiness of conviction and an enthusiasm, which seem to mark them

out as the earliest deliverances of the Prophet. These are usually brief and pointed. Lying between them is a third and more comprehensive and varied division, belonging to the central portion of his ministry at Mecca, less vigorous in style, and with a larger element of dogma and instruction; introducing also for the first time stories derived from Jewish and other sources.

**Classification of Sûras.**—There would thus be four classes or orders of sûras, the limits of which are in general sufficiently defined. Sir William Muir endeavours to establish a more elaborate classification into six periods, and holds that some of the chapters at least were uttered before Muhammad received his definite call, as recorded in the 96th sûra.<sup>1</sup> This therefore would not be according to his arrangement the first in time, but was preceded by some eighteen others, composed before Muhammad definitely conceived of himself as having a mission to his people. The following is a brief statement of the classification which he adopts:—

(1) Eighteen sûras were composed before the formal call to the office and work of a prophet. These are short poetical pieces, setting forth

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *supra*, p. 178.

moral and religious truth; and their precise order amongst themselves is uncertain. Chapter ciii., the “sûra of the Afternoon,” is set down as absolutely the first:—

By the declining day I swear !

Verily, man is in the way of ruin ;

Excepting such as possess faith,

And do the things which are right,

And stir up one another unto truth and steadfastness.<sup>1</sup>

The most important however of these and the best known, although at the same time among the most uncertain in date, is the opening sûra of the Qurân called *Al-Fâtihah*, a kind of confession of faith recited by the pious Muham-madan many times a day, and which forms a part of every order of public worship:—

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds ! The Compassionate, the Merciful ! The King of the day of Judgement ! Thee do we serve, and unto Thee do we cry for help. Lead us in the straight path ; the path of those unto whom Thou art gracious ; not of those against whom Thou art wroth, nor of those who go astray.

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<sup>1</sup> I quote generally Sir W. Muir's own renderings, which are often paraphrases rather than translations. But they have the advantage over a literal translation of vigour and picturesqueness ; and convey fairly in my judgement the force and meaning of the original.

Other examples are sūra xcv., the “sūra of the Fig” :—

I swear by the Fig tree and the Olive,  
 By Mount Sinai, and by this land inviolate !  
 Verily We made Man of the choicest creation,  
 Then We rendered him the lowest of the low ;—  
 Excepting such as believe and work righteousness ;  
 Unto them shall be given a reward that fadeth not away.  
 Then, after this, what shall make thee deny the Day of  
 reckoning ?  
 What ! is not God the justest of all Judges ?

Or the “sūra of the Rising Sun,” no. xciii. :—

By the rising sunshine !  
 By the night when it darkeneth !  
 Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither hath He been  
 displeased.  
 The future shall surely be better unto thee than the past.  
 Thy Lord shall shortly dispense unto thee a gift ; and thou  
 shalt be satisfied.  
 What ! did He not find thee an orphan, and give thee a  
 home ;  
 Found thee astray, and guided thee aright ?  
 Now therefore as touching the orphan, oppress him not ;  
 And as touching him that asketh of thee, repulse him not ;  
 And as touching the favours of thy Lord, rehearse them.

(2) The second class comprises four sūras alone, which seem to belong to the time of the Prophet's call. To two of these, the 96th and 74th, reference has already been made. The 96th sūra is acknowledged to be of composite origin, only the earlier verses dating from this

period. The other two are the 112th, the chapter of Unity, the reward for reading which Muhammad declared to be equal to that for reading a third of the Qurân<sup>1</sup>; and the 111th, a denunciation of Abû Lahab, "father of flame," and his wife, who had mocked the Prophet at Mecca.

Say:—He is God alone; God the Eternal. He begetteth not, and is not begotten. And there is none like unto Him.

(3) Nineteen sûras compose the third division, revealed during the first five years of the Prophet's work after his call, up to the time of the emigration to Abyssinia. These are mainly doctrinal and descriptive, giving accounts of paradise and hell and of the resurrection, with declarations of hostility to the Quraish and re-proofs of their idolatry. To this period belongs the sûratu'l Qadr, or "sûra of Power," no. xevii., referring to the descent of the Qurân:—

Verily We sent it down on the Night of Power. And what shall cause thee to know what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. The angels and the spirits descend therein by the command of their Lord to execute every decree. It is peace until the rising of the morn.

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<sup>1</sup> "One day the Prophet said to his companions, 'What! have you not the power to read one-third of the Qurân in one night?' They replied, 'It is very difficult to do so.' His Excellency then said, 'Very well, read the Sûratu'l-Ikhlâs (112th); the reward for so doing is equal to that for reading one-third of the Qurân.'" Sell, p. 260, note.



As an example of another form of teaching may be quoted the 75th sūra, the "sūra of the Resurrection":—

It is not that I swear by the day of the Resurrection,  
Or that I swear by the self-accusing soul !  
Doth man think that We shall not gather together his  
bones ?

Yea, the smallest bones of his fingers We are able to replace.  
But man chooseth to deny what is before him.

He asketh, When will be the day of the Resurrection ?

Yea, when the sight is dazzled, and the moon darkened ;

And the sun and the moon meet together ;

On that day man shall say, Where is a place of refuge ?

But in vain,—there is no escape.

With thy Lord on that day is the sure asylum.

Man shall be told on that day of all that he hath done first  
and last ;

Yea, a man shall be witness against himself.

And if he put forth his plea, it shall not be accepted.

On that day shall faces be bright, looking unto their Lord :

And on that day shall faces be dismal ;

As if they thought that calamity should befall them.

But when the soul shall come up into the throat,

And it is said, Who hath a charm to recover him ?

And when he thinketh that his time is come,

And one leg is stretched out upon the other,

Unto thy Lord on that day shall he be driven.

Yea, he did not confide, and did not pray ;

And verily he held the truth for a lie, and turned away ;

Then he departed to his people with proud step.

It (the day) is nearer to thee, and nearer.

Then is it nearer to thee, and nearer.

Doth man imagine that he shall be left supreme ?

Was he not an embryo that burst forth ?  
 Then he became congealed blood ; and He formed him, and  
 fashioned him,  
 And made of him the pair, male and female.  
 Is He not of power sufficient to raise the dead ?

(4) A collection of twenty-two sûras covers the period up to the tenth year of Muhammad's ministry, or from 614—15 A.D. to 620 A.D. Here for the first time are found narratives and legends derived from native Arab, or more frequently Jewish sources, as for instance that of Moses and Pharaoh in sûra xxvi., and many others :—

Pharaoh said unto Moses, "Verily if thou take any god beside me, I will make thee one of those who are imprisoned." Moses said, "What if I come to thee with a convincing miracle?" He answered, "Produce it then, if thou art of those who deal truly." So he cast down his rod, and behold it became an evident serpent ; and he drew out his hand, and behold it appeared white to the spectators. Pharaoh said to the princes around him, "Verily this man is a cunning magician ; he is striving to expel you from your land by his magic ; what then do you advise?" They answered, "Detain him and his brother, and send through the cities messengers to bring to thee every cunning magician." So the magicians were assembled at the set time, on an appointed day. And it was said to the people, "Lo, ye are assembled together ; perchance we may follow the magicians, if they are successful." And when the magicians were assembled, they said unto Pharaoh, "Shall we indeed have a reward, if we are successful?" He answered, "Yea ; and verily ye shall be of those who draw near to me." Moses said to them, "Cast down what ye purpose

to cast down." And they cast down their cords and their rods, and said, "By the might of Pharaoh verily we shall be successful." And Moses cast down his rod, and it swallowed up that with which they had deceived. So the magicians cast themselves down worshipping. They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron."

(5) Thirty-one sūras belong to the period from the tenth year to the time of the Flight to Medina. Distorted histories from the gospels occur, rules are given for the observance of the rites of pilgrimage, and various doctrines laid down and elaborated. The chapters are longer, and in many cases apparently contain passages inserted from other and later revelations. The teaching with reference to paradise the resurrection, etc., is repeated and emphasized. The attributes of God are set forth, and idolaters again warned of the consequences of their sin. The following is the opening of chapter xix., the "sūra of Mary":—

A Commemoration of the mercy of the Lord to His servant Zacharias. When he called upon his Lord with a secret invocation, he said, "O Lord, as for me, my bones are decrepid, and my head white with hoar hair; and I have never prayed unto Thee, O Lord! unheard. Verily, I fear my kinsmen after me; and my wife is barren. Wherefore grant unto me from Thyself a successor, who shall be my heir, and an heir of the family of Jacob; and make him, O Lord! well-pleasing." "O Zacharias! We bring thee good tidings of a son, whose name shall be John; We have not made any to be called by that name before." He said, "O Lord! whence shall there be a son

unto me, since my wife is barren, and I truly have reached the imbecility of old age?" The Angel said, "So shall it be. Thus saith thy Lord,—It is easy unto Me; for verily I created thee heretofore when thou wast nothing." He said, "Lord, give me a sign." The Angel said, "This is thy sign. Thou shalt not speak unto any for three nights, though sound in health." And he went forth unto his people from the chamber, and he motioned unto them that they should praise God morning and evening.

(6) There are twenty sûras finally, that are assigned to the period of Muhammad's life at Medina. These are mainly concerned with theological questions and matters of organization, mingled with appeals to and denunciations of the Jews, and repetition of his earlier teaching on paradise and hell, the Qurân, and similar subjects. The sûras are long, and in most cases wearisome through reiterations. The examples that follow, which might easily be multiplied, will give a better idea than a mere description of the character and style of these chapters. The following is from sûra ii., the "sûra of the Cow":—

O children of Israel! remember my favour wherewith I showed favour upon you, and be true to your covenant with Me; I will be true to My covenant with you; Me therefore, revere Me; and believe in that which I have sent down confirming your Scripture, and be not the first to disbelieve it, neither for a mean price barter My signs; Me therefore, fear ye Me.

And cloak not the truth with falsehood, and hide not the truth when ye know it:

And observe prayer and give alms, and bow down with those who bow.

Will ye enjoin what is right upon others, and though ye read the Book forget your own souls? will ye not then understand?

And seek help with patience and prayer; and a hard duty indeed is this, but not to the humble,

Who bear in mind that they must meet their Lord, and that unto Him shall they return.

O children of Israel! remember my favour wherewith I showed favour upon you; and that to you above all creatures have I been bounteous.

And fear ye a day in which a soul shall not satisfy for a soul at all, nor shall any intercession be accepted from them, nor shall any ransom be taken, neither shall they be helped.

God! there is no God but He: the Living the Eternal. Slumber doth not overtake Him, neither sleep. To Him belongeth all that is in the heavens and in the earth. Who is he that shall intercede before Him, excepting by His permission? He knoweth that which is before them, and that which is behind them, and they shall not comprehend anything of His knowledge, saving in so far as He pleaseth. His throne stretcheth over heaven and earth, and the protection of them both is no burden unto Him. He is the lofty and the great.

From sūra xxiv., the "sūra of Light":—

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as the niche wherein is a lamp enclosed in glass, the glass of a refulgent star. From a blessed tree is it lighted, an olive neither of the east nor of the west. Its oil is near unto giving light, even if the fire toucheth it not. It is light upon light. God guideth towards His light whom He pleases.

The fifth chapter, the "sûra of the Table," contains what has been supposed to be a reference to the Christian Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:—

When the Apostles of Jesus said, "O Jesus, son of Mary! Is thy Lord able to send down to us a Table from heaven?" He said, "Fear God, if ye are believers." They said, "We desire to eat therefrom, and to have our hearts assured, and to know that Thou hast indeed spoken unto us the truth, and to become witnesses thereof." Then said Jesus, son of Mary, "O God our Lord! send down to us a Table from heaven, that it may become a festival to us, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from Thee; and do Thou nourish us, for Thou art the best of nourishers." God said, "Verily I will send it down unto you; but whoever among you after that shall disbelieve, surely I will chastise him with a chastisement, wherewith I will not chastise any other creature."

In the same sûra is an account of the relation in which Muhammad, at one time at least, believed the Qurân to stand to earlier Divine revelations:—

Verily We have sent down the Law, wherein are guidance and light. By it did the prophets who followed the truth<sup>1</sup> judge the Jews; the doctors and the priests also, in accordance with that with which they were entrusted of the book of God; and they were witnesses thereof. Wherefore fear not men, but fear Me; and barter not My signs for a small price. And whoso doth not judge by that which God hath sent down, verily they are the unbelievers. . . . And in their footsteps We caused Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow, confirming the

<sup>1</sup> Lit. who *Islamized*.

law which was before him. And We gave him the gospel ; therein is guidance and light, confirming also the law which was before it,—a guidance and warning to the pious,—and that the people of the gospel may judge according to that which God hath sent down therein. And whoso will not judge according to that which God hath sent down, verily they are the disobedient ones. And We have sent down to thee the Book (*i.e.* the Qurân) in truth, confirming and bearing witness to the book which was before it. Judge then between them according to that which God hath sent down, and follow not their lusts, away from the truth which has come to you. Verily to all of you have We given a law and a way.

Two brief illustrations may be given in conclusion of the moral and ethical precepts of the Qurân. The first is from the sūra just quoted:—

O ye who believe ! verily wine, and games of chance, and images, and divining-arrows, are an abomination from the work of Satan. Shun them therefore, that ye may prosper. Verily Satan striveth that he may sow among you enmity and hatred in the wine and games of chance, and turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will ye not then refrain ? And obey God, and obey the Apostle ; and take heed. Verily if ye turn back, then know that our Apostle's duty is to give a plain warning.

In sūra iv., the “ sūra of Women,” is contained the following enactment on the slaying, accidental or otherwise, of a fellow Muslim :—

A believer killeth not a believer except by error ; and whoso killeth a believer by error, then is he bound to set free a believing slave ; and the ransom is to be paid to his people, unless they spend it in alms. If then he be of a people hostile


to you, and be a believer, then is he (the slayer) bound to set free a believing slave ; but if he be of a people between whom and you there is an alliance, then the ransom is to be paid to his people, and he is bound to set free a believing slave. And for him that cannot find the means (there is prescribed) a fast of two consecutive months, a penance from God ; and God is wise, all-knowing. And whoso kills a believer of set purpose, his recompense is hell ; for ever shall he abide therein. And God is wroth with him, and doth curse him, and prepareth for him a sore punishment.

**Relation to Tradition and Old and New Testament Narratives.**—With regard to the sources on which Muhammad drew for his teaching not less than his narrative, these have already been described as three, in addition to the early legends and practices of Arabia :—Jewish traditions and beliefs, as they were encountered by him especially at Medina ; Christianity in a mixed and debased form, with which indeed it is doubtful if he ever came into direct contact ; and Persian Zoroastrianism. It is against all probability to suppose that among these were comprised written documents ; the instruction conveyed to him, and which he in turn passed on to his followers, can hardly have been otherwise than entirely oral. Of the three sources the first unquestionably exercised the most powerful external influence on the creed and doctrine of Muhammad, and therefore on the Qurân itself. The great names of the Old



Testament, Abraham Jacob Joseph and others, reappear here. Their histories are given in a more or less fanciful and altered shape ; and are put forward as original Divine revelations. Perhaps the most curious and noticeable variation from the Biblical account is that, according to the view held by most Muslims, it was Ishmael, and not Isaac, whom his father would have offered up in sacrifice. This however is not definitely stated in the Qurân, and appears to be a matter of inference.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ is frequently referred to as a great prophet, the incidents of His life and death are mentioned, His miracles and the gospel which He taught. The name of John the Baptist also occurs. On the other hand, the doctrine of the jinns seems clearly to be derived from the magi of Persia ; probably

<sup>1</sup> The passage is in one of the Meccan sûras, no. xxxvii. ; but the son who is referred to is not expressly named :—And when he was of an age to assist him in work, Abraham said, “My son, verily I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee ; consider then what thou seest right.” He said, “My father, do what thou art commanded ; thou shalt find me of the patient, if God will.” And when they had become resigned, he laid him down on his forehead. And We cried to him, “O Abraham ! Now hast thou satisfied the vision. Verily thus do We recompense the righteous.” This was indeed a conclusive trial. And We redeemed him with a great ransom ; and We left over for him among posterity. Peace be upon Abraham.



also that of the resurrection, and in substance the conception of paradise and hell. There is only one distinct quotation from the Christian Scriptures, sūra xxi. 105, referring to, and citing the words of Ps. xxxvii. 29.<sup>1</sup> But there are several passages which suggest the language and thoughts of the Old Testament, and even of the New. It is not however likely that Muhammad had ever actually seen a copy of either. Nor is it certain that an Arabic version was in existence in his day.

**Abrogation.**—Mention should also be made here of the curious doctrine of abrogation. The piecemeal method in which the Qurân was given forth enabled Muhammad to supplement, or entirely annul any rule or revelation which was found to be inconvenient in practice.<sup>2</sup> According to the tradition, two hundred and twenty-five such verses have been set aside by later revelations; and most of these are found

<sup>1</sup> "And now, since the Law was given, have We written in the Psalms that 'My servants the righteous shall inherit the earth.'"

<sup>2</sup> Sūra ii. 100: "Whatever verse We cancel or cause thee to forget, We bring a better or its like. Knowest thou not that God hath power over all things?"

Sūra xvi. 103: "And when We change one verse for another, and God knoweth best what He revealeth, they say, 'Thou art only a fabricator.' Nay! but most of them have no knowledge."

naturally in Meccan sūras. A list of twenty, presumably the most important, is given by Jalālu'd - Dîn, the abrogation of which is acknowledged by all. Incompatible as this appears to us to be with any theory of inspiration or infallibility, the contradiction does not appear to have troubled the doctors of Islām. One of the greatest moral stains on the character of Muhammad is the way in which, in later years, he made use of this freedom to abrogate and annul in order to gratify his own passions.

**Claims of Qurân.**—To a Muhammadan the Qurân is the perfect and unapproachable model of style, as well as a book of inspired teaching. Muhammad himself challenged his opponents to produce a single sūra equal to any contained therein; and we are not told that the challenge was ever taken up. All the rules of grammar rhetoric etc., that are taught in Muslim schools, are founded on the Qurân, and deduced from its practice. So that there is no cause for wonder if the book be found to conform to them in the minutest details. It is believed further that its directions are obligatory for all time, and under all circumstances; that the least and apparently most trivial regulations for the behaviour of the early Muslims, although manifestly adapted to the needs of inhabitants of Arabia, are uni-

versally binding upon all men, equally with the most solemn moral obligations and duties. No degree or distinction in the character of the ordinances enjoined is admitted. They are without exception imperative upon all who in any age or country adopt the religion of Islâm; and they are, in theory at least, sufficient for every possible requirement. Nothing more is needed for salvation. They demand no modification, and they are capable of no improvement. That these words are not too strong, an extract from a late number of the *Egyptian Herald* Feb. 22nd 1896 may be cited to prove. The *Herald* is the exponent of orthodox Musalmân ideas at Cairo; and the editor writes with reference to some words uttered at the opening of a mosque in London:—

“Both (speakers) seem to have spoken at the opening proceedings in favour of adapting Islâm to European ideas. I do not know what meaning they attach to the phrase; but I do know that no adaptation or alteration of Islâm will be accepted by any Muslim people. Islâm as a religion, as a guide to man in life, in his duties to God and man, is divine and perfect. To say that it needs adaptation is to say that it is neither divine nor perfect, and no Muslim can or will admit either assumption. Islâm as it is is

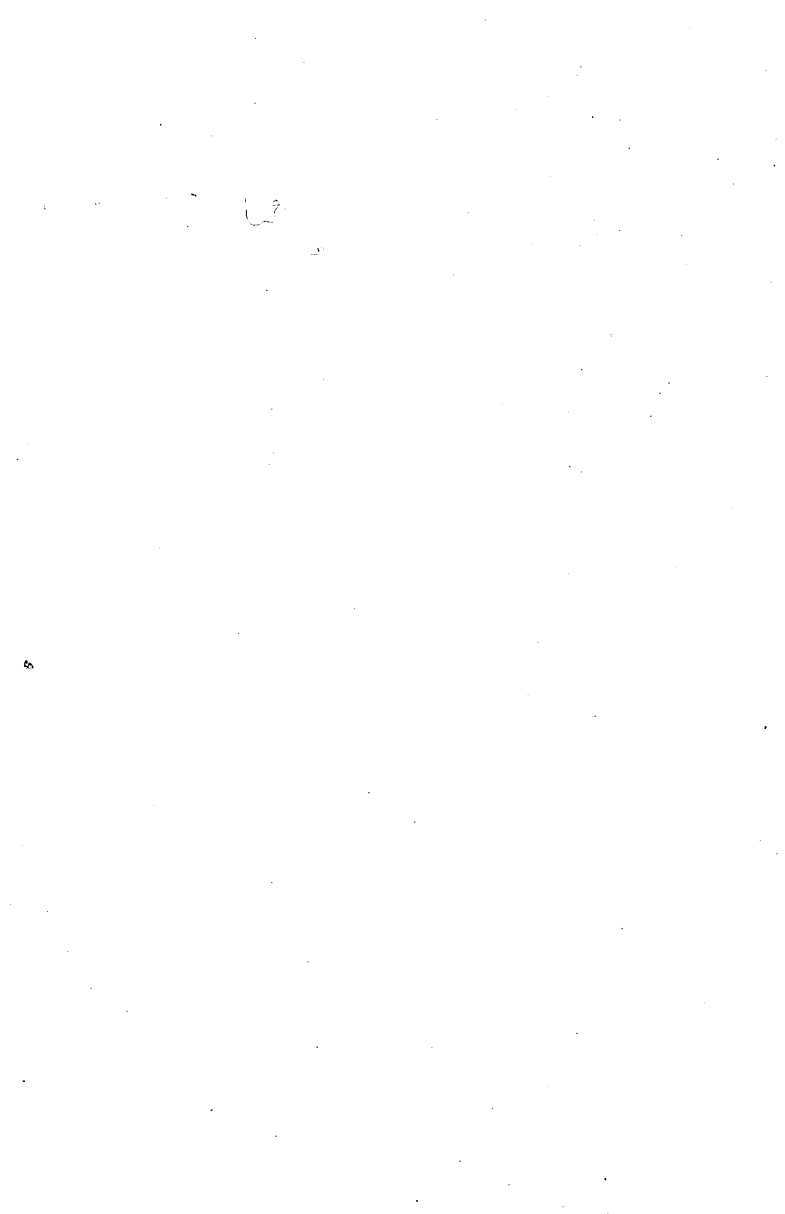
perfect, and as wonderfully adapted to the needs of man in England, or in the Arctic regions, as it is to the Bedouins of the Arabian desert; and the fact that it is so is one of the striking proofs of its Divine origin. It is written, 'There is no change in the words of God'; and therefore the Qurân and the Sunnat are for ever and for all men unchangeable."

Farther east, at Poona, in December of the preceding year, a conference of Musalmân gentlemen and doctors was held to consider whether it would be advisable to join with Hindus and others in promoting measures of social reform. The following resolution was passed:—"In the face of the Qurân it is altogether needless for the Musalmâns to join in any purely sectional conference, for Islâm is a perfect exponent of social emancipation and human progress in all its aspects."<sup>1</sup> It would not be difficult to multiply examples and illustrations. The Qurân has been erected by its own disciples into an immovable barrier to all real improvement and growth.

<sup>1</sup> I owe these two quotations to the Rev. E. Sell, *Faith of Islâm*, second edition, pp. 299, 332, notes.



## DOCTRINES AND DEVELOPMENTS





## DOCTRINES AND DEVELOPMENTS

THE Muslim creed, or articles of belief, may be conveniently treated of under the two divisions of (1) the origins or early principles, and (2) the nature and extent of the faith, its development in various lands and among various peoples; or in other words the sources from which the beliefs are derived, and the articles of belief themselves. Under the latter head will naturally fall to be considered the orders and sects of Islâm, which have arisen at different times, and in which have been crystallized doctrinal and theological ideas and tendencies. The Qurân, of which some account has been given, is far from being the sole authority on which is based Muhammadan faith and practice. This is indeed supreme, beyond challenge or question above all others,—the final court of appeal, and the only authority which is accepted by all alike whether orthodox or heretic. There are however three further sources, mainly independent of the Qurân but in part derived from it, which are everywhere recognised, although

as to the precise limits and details and contents there is dispute between the different schools of thought. These three are the *Sunnat* or Tradition, the *Ijmā'*, and the *Qiyās*. Taken with the Qurân they constitute the four foundations of the Muhammadan faith.

**Sunnat.**—The term *Sunnat* signifies “usage,” or “rule”; and is applied technically to the rule of faith or observance founded on the traditions. It is obligatory not only to obey the written word of Muhammad, but as far as possible to conform in everything to his practice,—to do as he did in ordinary life, and not merely to follow his religious precepts.<sup>1</sup> Thus within the early centuries a record was made of all the sayings and acts of the Prophet traditionally known and handed down from the Companions, or first followers of Muhammad. The accounts thus preserved were diligently sifted examined and compared, and the collected results embodied in the so-called “six correct books.” Of these six the earliest in date was compiled at the beginning of the third century of the Hijrah by a Muhammadan doctor of

<sup>1</sup> “The essence of religion has been stated by a learned theologian to consist of three things: first, to follow the Prophet in morals and in acts; secondly, to eat only lawful food; thirdly, to be sincere in all actions.” Sell, p. 21.

Bokhâra, who is said to have gathered together traditions to the number of 600,000. He rejected however after investigation all but 7275 as insufficiently authenticated; and placed these on record in his book. Each tradition was required to be certified by a chain of witnesses, technically an *isnâd*, by whom in succession it had been handed down from the contemporaries of the Prophet. The validity and obligatory character of the tradition depends upon the nature of the *isnâd*. In order that this may be accepted as a rule of life and conduct, it is necessary that the several links in the chain should be formed by persons well known for their integrity and reliability. The authority of these traditions is second only to that of the Qurân. If the *isnâd* is perfect, obedience to the rule formulated or precedent set is absolutely incumbent upon all believers. Clearly also no genuine tradition can by any possibility be opposed to the Qurân. To these again the same law of abrogation is applied as to the Qurân itself, *i.e.* an earlier may be modified or set aside by a later tradition. It is to be noted that the six orthodox books are not recognised by the Shî'ahs, who have five different collections of their own; the earliest of which however dates only from the begin-

ning of the fourth century A.H., and is accordingly about a century later than the first Sunnî book. Muhammad himself gave command that his followers should observe the Sunnat. And it is distinctly asserted by Musalmân doctors, that the injunctions thus delivered and handed down are as though uttered by the very mouth of God. A parallel to these collections, devised as a supplement to the written law, is found in the Hebrew Talmud, and the "traditions of the elders" (Matt. xv. 2 f.; Mark vii. 3, 5). The distinction in authority therefore between the Qurân and the Sunnat is in practice little more than nominal.

*Ijmâ'.*—The third foundation of the faith is *Ijmâ'*, "unanimity," or unanimous consent of the Fathers. The early doctors and teachers of Islâm were acknowledged to be competent to lay down rules, and to supply precedents, in matters not covered by any known law or practice of the Prophet himself. These legal decisions, when uttered by a recognised authority and generally acquiesced in, came to have the force of law, and were equally binding with a formal tradition. To the men whose learning and high character entitled them to pronounce judgments of this kind was given the name of *Mujtahidûn*, plural of *Mujtahid*, signifying "one

who exerts himself," "is zealous" or "diligent," from the same root as *jihād*. Moreover theoretically such an authoritative decision may be given at any time, if there is found a man of the requisite high attainments in learning and piety; but in practice this position is conceded only to the Companions of the Prophet and their immediate successors. No others are by the orthodox Sunnīs held worthy of the honour.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sell's enumeration (p. 44) of the necessary qualifications of a Muftahd, taken from a Musalmān authority:—

(1) The knowledge of the Qurān and all that is related to it; that is to say, a complete knowledge of Arabic literature, a profound acquaintance with the orders of the Qurān and all their subdivisions, their relationship to each other and their connection with the orders of the Sunnat. He should know when and why each verse of the Qurān was written, should have a perfect acquaintance with the literal meaning of the words, the speciality or generality of each clause, the abrogating and abrogated sentences. He should be able to make clear the meaning of the "obscure" passages, to discriminate between the literal and the allegorical, the universal and the particular.

(2) He must know the Qurān by heart with all the Traditions and explanations.

(3) He must have a perfect knowledge of the Traditions, or at least of three thousand of them. He must know their source, history, object, and their connection with the laws of the Qurān. He should know by heart the most important traditions.

(4) A pious and austere life.

(5) A profound knowledge of all the sciences of the Law.

(6) A complete knowledge of the four schools of jurisprudence.

As Mr. Sell justly adds, "the obstacles are almost insurmountable."

The Shí'ahs, however, believe in the existence of a succession of Mujtahidûn up to the present time; and there are usually several in Persia, men held in the highest esteem for wisdom and a blameless life, but the bitterest opponents of all innovation from without whether in religion or in politics.

*Ijmâ'* is of three kinds, viz.—unanimity in opinion, unanimity in practice, and unanimity by tacit consent; the last expression is applied to such views and usages as have won their way gradually to general acceptance, and have then been allowed to pass unchallenged. Thus the binding force of *Ijmâ'* is mainly a question of sufficiency and degree of authority. Where the unanimous consent to any doctrine or observance is general and unqualified, it becomes equally binding with the ordinances of the Qurân or the Sunnat.

**Four Orthodox Systems.**—All these traditions and judgements have been crystallized or codified into the four great orthodox systems of jurisprudence, which bear the names of the four doctors of the law, Abû Hanîfah, Ibn Mâlik, Ash-Shâfi'î, and Ibn Hanbal. To one or other of these every Sunnî Muslim attaches himself. Since the days of these four founders, the four great *Imâms*, or "leaders," it is held that no

one has attained to the rank and dignity of a Mujtahid. Some brief account of these celebrated teachers is almost essential to a right understanding of the legal and doctrinal developments of Islâm.

*Abû Hanîfah* was born at Kûfa, or as others say at Basra, at the beginning of the eighth century of our era, and died at Baghdâd in or about the year 768 A.D. His teaching is deduced from the Qurân on the principles of a rigorous logic; and the part allowed to tradition is restricted to very narrow limits. He claimed to found everything on argument and inference, and his system therefore is of all the most logically coherent. At the present day in Turkey and India the doctrines of Abû Hanîfah are the most popular and generally accepted.

*Ibn Mâlik* was born at Medina, 716 A.D., and spent the whole of his life in that town, dying there in old age towards the end of the century. At Medina he had every opportunity of hearing and testing the various traditions concerning Muhammad; and of these he was a great collector. In contrast therefore to that of Abû Hanîfah his system has been described as historical and traditionary, giving prominence to record and story, where his rival had laid the

chief stress on reason and inference from the written word. Ibn Mâlik is even reported to have expressed on his deathbed much sorrow that at any time he had ventured to use private judgement. His teaching is current and accepted mainly in North Africa.

The founder of the third school of jurisprudence was *Ash-Shâfi'î*, a member of the tribe of the Quraish. He occupied a position intermediate between his two predecessors, and drew from them both. Born in Palestine in the year of the death of Abû Hanîfah, he spent his youth at Mecca, but the greater part of his later life at Cairo, where he died in or about the year 820 A.D. He is said to have been a man of immense and exact learning, and to have composed more works than any other Muhammadan author. It does not appear, however, that there was anything novel or original in his system. His authority is followed chiefly in Egypt and Arabia.

The last of the great Imâms, *Ibn Hanbal*, was born at Baghdâd in the year 780 A.D.; and there in his youth listened to the teaching of *Ash-Shâfi'î*, at the time of a visit which the latter paid to his city. By the heterodox Khalîf *Al-Ma'mûn*, 813-833 A.D., he was persecuted for maintaining the doctrine of the



eternity of the Qurân<sup>1</sup>; but was restored to liberty and honour a few years later in the reign of Ma'mûn's nephew Al-Mutawakkil, 847–861 A.D. Ibn Hanbal altogether abandoned the principle of logical or analogical deduction, on which Abû Hanîfah had proceeded, and based his system entirely on Traditionalism; thus in fact returning to the methods and principles of Ibn Mâlik, but carrying them to still greater lengths. He died at Baghdâd at the age of seventy-five, greatly respected for his pious character and life. For many years his reputation was widespread and his teaching greatly influential. But the system which he formulated, as far as it was possessed of distinctive characteristics, is now almost obsolete.

The third foundation may then be said practically to consist of the judgements of these four doctors. Their agreement is decisive to establish any article of faith. Nothing which is contrary to their expressed views is admissible, either as matter of belief or of practice.

**Qiyâs.**—The fourth foundation is *Qiyâs*; the meaning of which term is literally “measure”

<sup>1</sup> The decree of the Khalîf was passed in 212 A.H., or 827 A.D., that all who held the Qurân to be uncreated were guilty of heresy. Cp. Sell, p. 79 f.

or "comparison." The word is used technically of analogical reasoning or inference drawn from the Qurân, Sunnat, or Ijmâ'; and it is therefore strictly speaking supplementary to the first three. Clearly no new principle or teaching is really contained in Qiyâs, but merely the bringing to light and formulating what is already virtually present in earlier foundations,—the application of instructions and precedents already set forth to cases parallel or similar to those described. Thus, to take a familiar example, the Qurân forbids the use of *khamr*, Heb. *חֶמֶר*, a kind of intoxicating drink. From this it is inferred by Qiyâs that wine and opium are also interdicted, although neither of them are mentioned by name.

**The Five Pillars of Religion.**—These then are the four foundations of the faith, the summaries of law and doctrine for every Muslim believer. Upon these are based the practical injunctions of Islâm, the so-called "pillars of religion," the faithful observance of which constitutes to the pious Muhammadan the whole duty of man. These are five in number; and over the right understanding and interpretation of some of them much religious controversy has been held. The first is the recital of the *Kalimah*, or creed, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is

the Prophet of God";<sup>1</sup> the confession of the Divine Unity and Uniqueness, the great truth of Islâm, which has ever been the source and inspiration of its religious power. The recital of this formula constitutes a man a Muhammadan; to refuse to say these words is to be a *kâfir*, an "unbeliever" and an outcast. Musalmâns charge Christians with being polytheists, worshippers of three gods; and declare that by their doctrine of the Trinity they place themselves on a level with heathen and idolaters. The remaining pillars are as follows:—

(2) *Salât*, the five daily prayers.

(3) Fasting, especially the thirty days' religious fast of the month Ramadân.

(4) *Zakât*, or almsgiving; which in Islâm is regulated by law.

(5) The *Hajj*, or sacred pilgrimage to Mecca, in the twelfth month of the Muhammadan year.

**Kalimah or Creed.**—The Musalmân creed therefore, properly so called, is of the utmost simplicity, viz. belief in one God and acknowledgement of Muhammad as His Prophet. Undoubtedly to this plain and simple character much of the wonderful and widespread success

<sup>1</sup> "*Lâ ilâha illâ 'llâhu wa Muhammadun rasûlu 'llâhi.*" Qurân, sûras xlvii. 21, xlviii. 29.

of Islâm as a missionary religion is due. For it makes little preliminary demand either on the intellect or the heart; and on the mere recital of a short form of words places at once without further probation the newly-won disciple in a position of perfect equality with the oldest believer. Especially would this seem to have been the secret of its rapid progress in India; that it was not only the religion of the conquerors, but that it offered to the lowest a ready means of emancipation from the trammels and permanent degradation of caste; making them members as it were of a new and noble caste, where the distinctions of birth and occupation and name went for nothing, and a common faith theoretically at least made all brethren. In this bare confession of faith however are implied, or to it are added further doctrines, to which the orthodox Musalmân is expected to give his assent. These articles are enumerated as follows:—"I believe in God, Angels, Books, Prophets, the Last Day, the Predestination by the most High God of good and evil, and the Resurrection after Death." In this amplified or extended creed three points at least merit attention:—the doctrine of the Divine attributes contained in the first article of belief; of the Freedom of the Will, or rather the denial of its freedom in

the sixth; and Muhammadan Eschatology, fifth and seventh. Each of these demands a brief consideration.

**Attributes of God.**—On the question of the nature and attributes of God some of the sharpest controversies have been waged in the Musalmân world. The attributes are described as seven in number, viz.:—Life, Knowledge, Power, Will, Hearing, Vision, Speech. The orthodox view is that these are eternal, and a real part of the essence of God; that they are incapable of explanation or comprehension by human reason, but are to be accepted by faith. During the early centuries an influential sect of free-thinkers existed, called *Mu'tazilas*, or "separatists," who denied this dogma altogether, especially as regarded the attributes of hearing, vision, and speech; teaching that, while the nature of God was eternal, the attributes were mere accidents and not of the essence of His being. In their opinion also man was competent to a certain extent to gain a knowledge of God,—a proposition which the doctors of the orthodox party strenuously denied. In other words, the *Mu'tazilas* claimed the right of private judgement, and of liberal thinking even on the highest matters of faith. Their views, which included a rejection of the dogmas of the eternity

of the Qurân and of predestination, and a strong assertion of the free agency of man, were predominant at Baghdâd in the reigns of the three Abbâsid Khalîfs, Ma'mûn and his brother and nephew who in turn succeeded him, 813–847 A.D. Under Mutawakkil, another nephew of Ma'mûn, a return to orthodoxy took place, the Mu'tazilas were condemned and persecuted, and gradually ceased to exist. Their teaching represented the revolt of the spirit that craved for freedom in thought and life against the slavery and rigidity of the orthodox system. They would have emancipated Islâm from the bondage of traditionalism and the letter of the law, and given it liberty to shape its own doctrine and destiny. But the result would not have been the Islâm of Muhammad and his successors. The movement however, full of the promise of religious liberty as it appeared to be, failed and its advocates were silenced; and their failure is traced, without doubt rightly, to the fact that they devoted their strength to mere verbal discussions and intellectual theorising, and were destitute of any deep moral convictions or sincere love of the truth.

**Revival in North India.**—Within the last few years there has been an earnest attempt to revive the Mu'tazila school of thought and

teaching in the north of India, the leader of the movement being Syed Amîr Ali, a judge of the High Court of Bengal, and author of several works in English on Islâm and the life and character of Muhammad. What the permanent result may be it is yet too soon to forecast. It would seem to be a sincere endeavour, inspired by Western conceptions of rectitude and morality, to lead Muhammadanism forward on the lines of a true enlightenment and religious progress; an endeavour that will be watched with the utmost interest by every broad-minded lover of goodness and right. If the attempt fail, the failure will be one more example of the well-proved incapacity of old wine-skins to bear intact the strain of the new and strong ferment of Christian truth.

**Eternity of the Qurân.**—A second point raised by the Mu'tazilas in connection with the attributes of God was that of the eternity of the Qurân, to which reference has already been made. The question arose naturally in the discussion of the seventh attribute, that of Speech; which is understood by Muslim theologians to comprehend not only utterance with the mouth, but also all modes of revelation or communication of knowledge. Denying the eternity of the attributes, these teachers logically and of necessity refused to admit the eternity of the Qurân, which was a

corollary of the former doctrine. It would seem indeed that this particular dogma was not promulgated or held by the earlier Musalmâns; but was perhaps erected into a pillar of the faith and made binding in opposition to the opinions of the Mu'tazilas, in the second or third century after the Flight. The arguments adduced often appear to us to be mere hair-splitting and curious quibbles on words.<sup>1</sup> On both sides however men were found ready to suffer and die for their belief.

**Freedom of the Will.**—A third question much debated by the Mu'tazilas, and on which they found themselves at variance with their co-religionists, was that of the freedom of the will. The orthodox Musalmân is of course a rigid fatalist. All evil, no less than all good, proceeds from the eternal will of God. The decrees of *kismet* or fate rule all; from them there is no appeal, as there is no possibility of offering resistance. A school of thought however existed,

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sell, p. 187 ff., for illustrations of the arguments used by either party. The verse from the Qurân, "Verily His command when He willeth a thing is that He saith Be, and it is" (sûra xxxvi. 82), was brought forward to prove the eternal nature of the book in which it was written. "Almighty God created the world by means of the word Be! Now, if that word was created, one created thing would have created another."



and at one period exerted considerable influence, if not in practical life yet on the form and manner in which this doctrine was expressed, which endeavoured to soften the harshness of a stern theory by allowing to man a kind of restricted liberty in the execution of the Divine decrees. In other words, the eternal will of God might in a given case remain inoperative, its action suspended, unless set in motion by the human agent. These men were the followers of Al-Ash'ari, a famed and influential teacher, who flourished at the beginning of the tenth century of our era. They represented for a time the best orthodoxy; holding an intermediate position between the *Jabrians*, or extreme Calvinists, on the one hand, who denied to man any personal or free agency whatever, and with whom on most points they were in agreement; and the *Quadrarians* on the other, who rejected altogether the dogma of the absolute Divine decree, and ascribed to man unfettered power to determine his own actions. The views of the latter were practically identical with those of the Mu'tazilas. They have, however, long since ceased to be in any real sense effective on the life. In practice all Musalmâns hold the dogma of predestination in its most absolute and unbending form.

**Eschatology.**—The remaining subject that falls

to be considered is the Muhammadan doctrine of the Last Things, and of a future Judgement. All Muslims believe in a general Resurrection both of the good and the wicked, as taught by Muhammad himself in the Qurân. Believers will enter Paradise, where they will revel in all manner of sensual delights. All non-Musalmâns or infidels will be tortured in hell. There appears to be a difference of opinion as to the destiny of wicked or unfaithful Muhammadans. Some hold that their belief in one God and in His Prophet outweighs any evil of which they may have been guilty, and that they will at death equally with their fellow-believers be at once received into Paradise. Others suppose that they will undergo a short period of trial and purification in hell, at the close of which being set free from all defilement they will be admitted to their reward. The Mu'tazilas went further than this, and taught the existence of a purgatory, in which such souls after death were tested and prepared for a final state of blessedness or misery. All alike agreed in believing in the resurrection of the body.

Every man after death undergoes a preparatory examination in the grave by the angels Munkar and Nakîr. For this purpose a kind of temporary life is given to him, that he may

answer their questions as to his faith. Afterwards at the last day a balance will be set up between heaven and earth, where the actions, or as others say the books in which the record of the actions is written, are weighed under the superintendence of the angels Gabriel and Michael. Not all created beings however will be subjected to this test. Prophets and angels are altogether exempt. Moreover for unbelievers it is not necessary, seeing that their lot has already been determined. Every one will then have to pass the bridge *sirât*, lit. "road," suspended above hell. The good will find the way broad and easy, and will swiftly cross over to Paradise. Beneath the wicked the bridge will appear keen as a razor and fine as a hair, and they will fall off into the fire. But all Muslims will eventually be restored to Paradise; all unbelievers will suffer eternal torments in hell. Muhammad himself will intercede for those of his followers whose evil deeds outweigh the good in the balance. For the rest there is no intercessor, and their miserable fate is irretrievable. These details, and especially the feature of the bridge over hell, have been borrowed from Zoroastrianism.

**Prayer.**—Prayer, *salât*, is to be made five times a day at the appointed hours, either

individually and privately, or in the mosque and led by an *Imâm*. Any Muhammadan, being of full age and ceremonially pure, may act as *Imâm* or leader of the prayers, standing in front of the congregation; but there is usually one man appointed as minister for each mosque.<sup>1</sup> These seasons of prayer are immediately before sunrise, at noon, midway between noon and sunset, at sunset, and as soon as darkness has closed in. Prayer at other times is voluntary and meritorious, but these five are of strict obligation. The form observed consists in the recital of passages from the *Qurân*, with other formulæ or expressions of faith such as "God is great," and accompanied by bowings and prostrations of the body. The summons to prayer is given by the *mu'azzin* from the minaret, or if there is no minaret from the side of the mosque. The prayers themselves must all be said in Arabic, whatever the language or nationality of the

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad himself is said to have prescribed the qualifications of an *Imâm*, as follows:—Let him act as *Imâm* to a congregation, who knows the *Qurân* thoroughly; and if all present should be equal in that respect, then let him perform who is best informed in the rules of prayer; and if they are equal in this respect also, let him act as *Imâm* who has fled for the sake of *Islâm*; and if equal in this likewise, let that person act who is oldest. But the governed must not act as *Imâm* to the governor.

worshippers.<sup>1</sup> On Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, a sermon or sermons are preached in the mosque, of which the following is an illustration:—

Praise be to God, the Creator of the earth and heavens, the Maker of light and darkness. I testify that there is no god but God. He is one. He has no partner. Know, O Believers! that this confession will save you from trouble and calamity. I testify that Muhammad, who wipes out error and infidelity, is the servant and Apostle of God. The mercy of God be on our Lord Muhammad, the Lord of Creation, and on his descendants, and on his Companions be grace and honour. . . . O God! help those who help the religion of Muhammad, and make us of their number. Make those wretched who corrupt it, and keep us aloof from all such. O believers! truly God orders you to do justice, and to show kindness to your kindred. He orders you to abstain from infidelity, and from the greater and the lesser sins. God warns you. God is the Most High, the Most Glorious. God is Great!<sup>2</sup>

The sermons are usually brief, for the Prophet declared that long sermons and short prayers would be a sign of the degeneracy of

<sup>1</sup> An interesting example is given by Mr. Sell, *Faith of Islâm*, p. 301 ff., of an authoritative judgement delivered at Madras in February 1880 on the case of a man who had ventured himself to use, and to recommend the use of Hindustani in the public prayers. He is formally declared to be “an infidel, an atheist, and a wanderer from the truth. He also causes others to wander.” As Mr. Sell very justly says, this man might have been guilty of open and flagrant sin and yet remained in Islâm; “but to approach God in prayer through the medium of his mother-tongue, was an offence so great that he could only be regarded as an outcast.”

<sup>2</sup> Sell, p. 269; where further examples will be found.

the last days. The form of prayer also that is used on Fridays is varied and more elaborate; but otherwise the day is not kept as different from ordinary days. Moreover before prayer it is always necessary to go through certain rites of purification, which consist in washings of parts of the body in a prescribed order and manner.<sup>1</sup> These washings may be performed with sand, when water is unobtainable or can only be procured with difficulty. Special ritual also and prayers are appointed to be used on special occasions, such as a festival or a funeral.

**Fasting.**—Much stress was laid by Muhammad on the virtue and obligation of fasting. This is of great merit, if practised voluntarily at any time; but it is especially incumbent on every true Muslim to fast as a matter of religious duty during *Ramadân*, the ninth month of the Muhammadan year, and the sacred month in which the *Qurân* was sent down to the lowest heaven. So holy is this month that the Prophet declared that in it the gates of paradise are open, the gates of hell shut, and the devil chained. Children are entirely exempt from the obligation

<sup>1</sup> O Believers! when ye address yourselves unto prayer, then wash your faces and your hands up to the elbow, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles." *Qurân*, sûra v. 8.

to fast; sick persons and travellers may defer the keeping of it, on condition that they observe an equal number of days at another time. All others must abstain entirely from food and drink between the hours of sunrise and sunset, but may feast at pleasure during the night. When Ramadân falls in the hot summer months this regulation bears very hardly on poor persons and those engaged in manual labour. The rich and well-to-do classes by sleeping most of the day feel little inconvenience.

**Almsgiving.** — Almsgiving, *zakât*, is also a matter of legal regulation in Islâm. Over and above, however, the gifts demanded by law are those dictated by pure benevolence, or a desire to win Divine favour. These last are termed *ṣadaqah*, “righteousness” or “sanctity”; cp. Heb. צדקה. A part, varying from a fortieth to a fifth, is taken from the property of every Muslim, and devoted to the relief of the poor and needy, or to other charitable objects. Various limitations are laid down as to the purposes for which the *zakât* may be employed; for example, it may not be given to near relatives, or to an infidel, or for the building of a mosque; neither is it exacted from the very poor. The provision thus made by Muhammad for the help and support of the destitute among his followers, and

on the whole faithfully observed by Muslims at the present day, is worthy of all praise.

**Hajj.**—The last of the pillars of the faith is the *Hajj*, or sacred pilgrimage to Mecca. For a detailed account of the ceremonies observed it must suffice to refer to Sell, *Faith of Islâm*, p. 287 ff. Sir Richard F. Burton made the pilgrimage in the disguise of a *hakîm*, or native doctor, in the years 1853–54, and has given a full and picturesque account of his adventures. Every Muhammadan, if it is at all within his power, must once at least during his lifetime make his way to Mecca at the season of pilgrimage, must pass round the sacred shrine, and kiss the black stone built into the corner of the wall. Special garments are worn, special rites performed and forms of prayer observed; while the crowds, the dirt, and the heat combine to render the visit a peril not only to health but to life. Thousands of pilgrims undertake the journey every year from every part of the Muhammadan world. Princes and wealthy men go in state. Poorer persons measure the entire distance on foot, or travel on the decks of crowded and insanitary pilgrim ships. Many never return, but perish by the way or in the holy city of exhaustion or disease. He who has thus visited Mecca is held in high honour ever after, and has



made sure of a place in paradise.<sup>1</sup> Shī'ahs however allow the pilgrimage to be performed by proxy.

**Sects.** The Shī'ahs.—The Muhammadans are separated into numerous sects, which in many instances hate and are ready to persecute one another as cordially as they hate the infidels. The greatest schism, that of the *Shī'ahs*, or "followers," had its origin in a dispute with reference to the succession of the early Khalīfs. The orthodox *Sunnīs*<sup>2</sup> recognise the first three Khalīfs as the true successors of Muhammad; and these form the vast majority of Muhammadans throughout the world. The Shī'ahs reject the claims of Abu Bakr Omar and Othmân, and maintain that Ali alone had the right to be heir to the position of ruler of the Faithful. Both parties arrogate to themselves the

<sup>1</sup> The regard with which Muhammadans look upon the sacred pilgrimage, and the importance attached to a due fulfilment of its rites, is curiously illustrated by a memorial presented by a number of Musalmâns in India to the Government, as late as the year 1895, relative to a proposed restriction on sanitary grounds of the pilgrim traffic:—"The Hajj is regarded and universally believed as an obligatory performance by all Muhammadans. In fact we believe it to be the surest way to salvation and paradise." Cp. Sell, p. 288, and note.

<sup>2</sup> Sunnī, one of the law or custom, a "traditionalist."

name of orthodox, and denounce their opponents as heretics. The Persians as a nation adopted the Shī'ah doctrines, and a few individuals and societies will be found holding the same views in the north of India and elsewhere. But their total number is estimated not to exceed 15 or 16 millions, as against the 140 or 150 millions of the Sunnīs.

In the belief of the Shī'ahs then the first lawful successor of Muhammad was his son-in-law Ali, and the three so-called Khalīfs who preceded him were usurpers. The Khalīfate is and must be hereditary, and is vested by Divine right in Ali and his descendants. To him was imparted the "light," which in the form of a ray of Divine glory was united to the body of Muhammad; and from him this light has passed on in the line of his descendants to the true *Imāms*, or "leaders" of the people. These last, by virtue of thus sharing in the nature of the Prophet himself, are sinless and perfect, absolutely wise and all-knowing. This doctrine of the Imām is the most important distinguishing feature of Shī'ah belief as compared with the orthodox Sunnīs. The latter make use of the term indeed, but in a much looser wider signification; holding that besides Muhammad himself with his immediate successors, and the

four great Imâms, the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence, there has ever been and still exists an indeterminate number of lesser Imâms, any appointed leader of prayer in a mosque being entitled to the name. Nor are the Imâms of the Sunnîs regarded as necessarily more holy than other men, or worthy of any special veneration. The Shġ'ahs, on the other hand, teach that there have been only twelve Imâms, of whom Ali was the first; and the names of the twelve are given in direct descent from Ali, the last being Abu'l-Qâsim, who lived towards the end of the second century after the Hijrah.<sup>1</sup> This twelfth Imâm is still alive, though in concealment; and he will eventually reappear as *Al-Mahdġ*, the "Guided," who will restore purity of faith and life to the earth. Of him Muhammad is said to have prophesied:—"There will be twelve Khalġfs after me; the first is my brother, the last is my son.' 'O messenger of God,' said the people, 'and who is thy brother?' The Prophet replied, 'Ali.' 'And thy son?' 'Mahdġ, who will fill the

<sup>1</sup> His tomb is shown at Mashhad or Meshed in Eastern Persia, where is a splendid mosque dedicated to his memory, to which large numbers of pilgrims resort from every part of the country. In the estimation of Shġ'ah Muslims, it is the most sacred spot in the world after Mecca and Karbalâ the place of the martyrdom of Husain.

earth with justice, even though it be covered with tyranny. He will come at last. Jesus will then appear, and follow him. The light of God will illuminate the earth, and the empire of the Imâm will extend from east to west.'” There have been several pretenders to the office of Mahdî; of whom the leader in the Sudân was the last. This doctrine of the Imâmat is regarded by the Shîahs as one of the pillars of the faith.

The main distinctions therefore between the Shîah and orthodox Musalmâns may be said to be two:—(1) Their belief in the Divine right of Alî and his descendants, as against those especially who held the office of Khalîf, but were not of the family of the Prophet; and (2) the teaching with respect to the Imâm. Other peculiarities are the doctrine of the present and perpetual existence of Mujtahidûn, to which reference has already been made (p. 258). Besides these they teach and practise a kind of religious compromise or reserve, according to which it is lawful to conceal at any time their real sentiments and faith, if the open avowal would expose them to inconvenience or suffering. In other respects also they seem to be less narrow and fanatical, although scarcely more open to religious conviction than the Sunnîs.

**Ismâ'ilians.**—Of the numerous subdivisions of the Shî'ah sect, one only appears to be of sufficient importance to call for mention here. The *Ismâ'ilians* take their name from Ismâ'îl, the eldest son of the sixth Imâm, whom they hold to be the true heir to the right and office of Imâm, although rejected by other Shî'ahs in favour of his younger brother Mûsâ.<sup>1</sup> After his time began a succession of "Concealed Imâms," of whom one is always in the world, although he may be unrecognised and unknown. From this teaching there originated various secret sects and heretical movements, notably the revolt of the Karmathians in the fourth century A.H.; when a large part of the empire of orthodox Islâm was overrun by these sectaries, and Mecca itself captured and given up to plunder. The Fâtimid dynasty also in North Africa and Egypt was descended from a branch of the same sect. Established by a professed Mahdî, Obeidu'llah, at the beginning of the tenth century A.D., they founded the city of Cairo, and were only overthrown by Saladin in 1171. From these again the Druses in the mountains

<sup>1</sup> The account given of their origin is that Ismâ'îl was one day seen intoxicated in public. Accordingly his father disinherited him, and appointed Mûsâ in his stead. Some of the people refused to accept this decision, holding that drunkenness was no bar to the position and divine rights of an Imâm.

of Lebanon received their teaching and peculiar beliefs.

**Assassins.**—From the same stock sprang the followers of *Hasan*, the “Old Man of the Mountain,” so famous in the days of the Crusades, —the *Hashshāshīn*, or Assassins, devotees of the drug *hashīsh*, who fell impartially upon Christian and Muslim, and made their name a terror throughout Syria; whose last representative and descendant now lives, it is said, a quiet citizen in Bombay.

**Muharram Festival.**—The principal festival of the Shī‘ahs, which they are alone in observing, is that of the *Muharram*,<sup>1</sup> the first month of the Muhammadan year. The earlier half of this month is kept in memory of the death of Husain, son of Ali, on the battlefield of Karbalā, 680 A.D. Various ceremonies are observed, and a kind of symbolic representation carried out, intended to recall the circumstances of his death. The forms of observance are modified slightly in different countries. An interesting and detailed account of the annual practices in India on the occasion of the Muharram is given by Mr. Sell, *Faith of Islām*, pp. 306–313. These all culminate in evening assemblies in booths or tents erected for the purpose, sometimes how-

<sup>1</sup> From the root *harima*, to be unlawful or forbidden.

ever in permanent buildings, when sermons are delivered in honour of Ali and his sons, the history and circumstances of the death of Husain are related, and the men and boys, often frantically excited, stand in rows beating their breasts in real or feigned sorrow. On the tenth day, the day on which Husain was slain, processions carrying banners and standards go about the streets. The tenth day of this month is by the Sunnîs also regarded as sacred, as the day when Adam and Eve, heaven and hell, were created.

**Minor Sects.**—Of the numerous minor sects of Islâm, some of which have wielded an influence and excite an interest out of all proportion to their numbers, three deserve special notice:—(1) the *Sûfis*, mystics and pantheists, from among whom have arisen the various orders of darwîshes; (2) the *Wahhâbîs*, a military and fanatical reform movement in Arabia at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the present century; and (3) the *Bâbîs* of Persia. Some knowledge of these three at least is essential to a right understanding of the present position and relationships of Islâm. Two of them, it will be noted, the most thoughtful and permanent, have their source and home in Persia, that rich nursing-mother of Muhammadan heresies.

**Sûfis.**—The origin and meaning of the name *Sûfi* is in dispute. Most probably it is to be explained as derived from the Arabic *sûf*, “wool”; and has reference therefore to the garments worn by the primitive teachers or professors of asceticism. Others hold that the word is borrowed from the Greek *σοφία*. According to one tradition, which certainly cannot lay claim to inherent probability, the sect was founded by a woman within the first century after the Hijrah. There is considerable likeness between the mystical teaching of the Sûfis and early Gnostic theories, both doubtless drawing from the same source,—the dualism and religious speculation of the ancient Persian faith. Thus Sûfism teaches a doctrine of emanations. All souls, all beings, proceed from the one Divine soul, and to Him they will return. The supreme duty of man therefore is to love God, who is Himself perfect love, and thus by abstraction and meditation on His nature and unity to hasten the final absorption into the one Divine essence. All religion further is a matter of indifference except so far as it promotes this great end; Islâm is the best religion, because it most assists man to attain union with God. The Divine Being alone has a real existence. All mere external



and physical things are illusions. And the Sūfī, who has reached the goal of oneness with God, possesses an "inner Light," an infallible guide, in comparison with which the dictates of reason and sense are misleading, and require to be ignored. Since moreover God is the sole reality, all actions good or evil are to be ascribed to Him; and moral responsibility, as far as man is concerned, does not exist. In harmony with this teaching, many of the Sūfīs have in fact professedly cast off all the restraints of morality and religion.

On the other hand the works of Sūfī writers contain much that is lofty and beautiful. It is stated that almost all Persian poetry is Sūfīistic; and that its lusciousness and sentimentality is not intended to be taken literally, but is to be understood in a figurative and spiritual sense.

In the pursuit of this great end of absorption into the Divine, eight stages or degrees are marked out, namely Service, Love, Seclusion or inward meditation, Knowledge, Ecstasy, Truth, Union with God, and finally Extinction.<sup>1</sup> The last, entire absorption into the Deity, is attainable only by death. Those who have reached the fifth, sixth, or above all the seventh stage,

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Hughes; Dict., s. v. Sūfī; Sell, p. 114 f.

are highly honoured. Rules are laid down for the attainment of each degree, consisting generally in prayer, meditation, and spiritual exercises; until the last step is gained, in which all external observances are abandoned as unnecessary, and the soul being in full possession of the truth and in union with the Divine is absorbed in contemplation, until by death it is set free from the bonds and entanglements of this world and reaches its final end in God.

**Darwîshes.**—This course of life, likened by the Sûfis themselves to a journey, is usually followed as a solitary *faqîr*, or in one or other of the *Darwîsh* orders, of which there are large numbers throughout the Muslim world. The city of Constantinople alone is said to contain two hundred monasteries. These orders, distinguished among themselves by peculiarities of habit and dress, are of two great classes,—those with the Law and those without the Law. The former observe the legal directions and regulations of Islâm, the hours of prayer, fasting, etc. The latter regard themselves as above all law, do not even frequent the mosques to pray, teach that the doctrines of Paradise and Hell are only allegories, and spend their lives professedly in meditation and spiritual exercises, but often in mere sensual indulgence. Candi-

dates for admission into one of these orders have in many cases to pass through a long and painful probation. There are also wandering darwîshes, who live an independent and often extremely ascetic life. To the number of these belong the faqîrs of India and other countries.

**Wahhâbîs.**—The sect of the *Wahhâbîs* took its rise in a protest against later developments of thought and practice in Islâm, which were looked upon as a decline from the pure and simple first principles of Muhammad and the Companions. The founder of the sect, Muhammad ibn Abdu'l-Wahhâb, was born in the year 1691 A.D. in the Nejd, or desert region of central Arabia. There he set himself to oppose the widespread degeneracy of the times, which appeared to him to be manifested especially in the reverence paid to saints and holy men, with pilgrimages and offerings at their tombs; and in the authority accorded to teachers later than Muhammad, in particular to the four great Imâms of the four schools of jurisprudence. He and his followers called themselves Unitarians, declaring that all other Muhammadans were really polytheists, worshippers of great men such as Ali and of saints and angels. They professed on the

contrary to found their system solely on the Qurân, the Sunnat, and the Ijmâ' of the Companions of the Prophet. In their eyes the two chief sins were the paying of divine honours to a creature, and the introduction of changes into faith or practice not sanctioned by Muhammad himself. The Wahnâbîs have been called the "Protestants" of Islâm; they uncompromisingly opposed themselves to all indulgence or concession to the spirit of the age, endeavouring to bring Muhammadanism back to the point at which its author left it, and to stereotype it there for all time.

The successors of Abdu'l-Wahnâb sought to propagate his doctrines by force of arms, and extended their power over the whole of southern Arabia, destroying the tombs of the saints, the cupolas and ornaments of the mosques, and making bonfires of all the personal finery and jewels on which they could lay their hands. In the spring of 1803 Mecca itself was taken, and a rigid observance of the law, especially in regard to the five daily prayers in the mosque, enforced on all the inhabitants. The citizens' pipes, rosaries, silk dresses, etc., were collected and burnt in public. And the story is related that one lady, caught in the act of smoking, was placed upon an ass with her face to the tail,

and led through the city as an example to evil-doers. Later in the same year Medina was captured, and the tomb of the Prophet plundered of all its rich decorations.

The leader of the Wahhâbî army in these attacks was Sa'ûd, grandson of Muhammad ibn Sa'ûd the founder of the Wahhâbî dynasty, who had been an influential Arabian chief and married the daughter of Abdu'l-Wahhâb. Sa'ûd died in 1814, and his son and successor Abdullah was taken prisoner in battle by the Turks, sent to Constantinople, and there executed in the year 1818. With him the military power and dominion of the Wahhâbîs came practically to an end. But the dynasty still maintains itself in Eastern Arabia with its capital at Riad, the present chief being another Abdullah, great-grandson of the leader put to death by the Turks.

**Wahhâbîs in India.**—The principles of the Wahhâbîs spread widely at the beginning of the present century in the north of India; where a certain Syed Ahmad travelled through the country preaching the Wahhâbî doctrines, which he had learnt while at Mecca on pilgrimage. He and his associates and successors endeavoured to emulate in the Panjâb the example of the Arabian chiefs, and to propagate their teaching

by the sword. In this attempt they came into collision first with the Sikhs, in fighting against whom Syed Ahmad was slain in 1831; and later with the British, by whom the remnant of his militant followers was defeated, and driven across the border into Afghanistan. Their propaganda is said to be still carried on by means of pamphlets and printed books on a large scale, and by itinerant missionaries especially in Bengal. The same is reported to be the case also in the north of Africa and the Malay Archipelago.

Wahhâbîism therefore was an attempt at reform in the direction of the removal of abuses, which laid stress on the central doctrine of the Unity of God, and condemned as sinful all innovation or change. In the first of these respects the movement deserves sympathy and approval. But little as the violent methods of its leaders can command assent, the most serious difficulty is found in the consideration, that success would have bound the whole Muhammadan world immovably fast by the rules and regulations formulated by one man for Arabian society at the beginning of the seventh century of our era. No progress, according to their theory, was either desirable or possible; and the steps taken in advance, whether in the develop-

ment of doctrine or the harmonizing of practice with the needs of a new age, must be retraced. A reforming movement that thus sets back the hands of the clock of history a thousand years, and would nail them there, is foredoomed to failure. Its triumph would be an anachronism and a disaster. As an organized sect Wahhâbiism seems to be everywhere on the decline; nor is there any probability of its revival.

Bâbîs.—The most interesting and remarkable sect that has arisen in Islâm is that of the *Bâbîs* of Persia, a people around whom some measure of mystery still clings as to their position and precise beliefs; for on account of the persecution to which they have been subjected, and the suspicion with which they are regarded, it is necessary for them to observe much caution in their intercourse with outsiders. By origin and belief they are closely connected, as would naturally be expected, with the Shî'ahs. It will be remembered that a fundamental tenet of the latter was a theory of the perpetual existence of the "Concealed Imâm." This doctrine then is developed and carried further by the Bâbîs; who teach that after the disappearance of the twelfth Imâm at the beginning of the fourth century of the Hijrah, 940 A.D., communication was kept up for a time with his

followers on earth by means of intermediaries, inspired men, who were termed "Doors." Of these the last died about the year 1000 A.D., leaving no successor. The office of "Door" therefore remained vacant until the beginning of the present century; when a certain Shaikh Ahmad, an ascetic and learned man, revived the doctrine, and gained a considerable following of men who made this the cardinal point of their creed. The greater number of his disciples some fifty years later accepted the founder of the sect of the Bâbîs as rightful heir to this sacred office, and their own spiritual guide and director. But there are still remaining in Persia a few "*Shaikhîs*," who hold themselves distinct from the followers of the Bâb. This dogma, the belief in the existence of a continual succession of perfect men, who form channels of communication between the "concealed Imâm" and his disciples on earth, is called the fourth Pillar or Support of the Faith, and forms the basis of the claims of the Bâb and his successors to Divine inspiration and authority.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the summary of Shaikhî teaching from the lips of a doctor of the sect given by Mr. E. G. Browne in his *Year amongst the Persians*, a fascinating and instructive book.— "The Bâlâsarîs, or ordinary Shî'ites, assert that the essentials of religion are five, to wit, belief in the Unity of God (*tawhîd*), the Justice of God (*adl*), the Prophetic Function (*nubuwwat*),



Mîrzâ 'Alî Muhammad, the Bâb, was born at Shîrâz in Persia in the autumn of the year 1820 A.D. Occupied there for some years in business he afterwards removed to Karbalâ, where he came into contact with the leader of the followers of Shaikh Ahmad, and employed himself in writing commentaries on the Qurân. At the age of twenty-four he publicly announced himself as a spiritual guide, and assumed the title of the Bâb, or "Door," winning many converts from among the more thoughtful and religious-minded of the people. His teaching excited great attention, and his influence extended so rapidly even amongst the doctors and heads of the Muhammadan faith, that much opposition was

the Imâmat (*imâmat*), and the Resurrection (*ma'âd*). Now we say that two of these cannot be reckoned as primary doctrines at all; for belief in the Prophet involves belief in his book and the teachings which it embodies, amongst which is the Resurrection; and there is no more reason for regarding a belief in God's Justice as a principal canon of faith than belief in God's Mercy, or God's Omnipotence, or any other of His attributes. Of their five principles or essentials (*uṣūl*), therefore, we accept only three; but to these we add another, namely, that there must always exist among the Musulmâns a 'perfect Shīte' (*Shī'a-i-kāmil*), who enjoys the special guidance of the Imâms, and acts as a Channel of Grace (*Wâsita-i-feyz*) between them and their Church. This tenet we call 'the Fourth Support' (*Rukn-i-râbi*), or fourth essential principle of religion." P. 474 f. This exposition would, I imagine, be accepted by any Bâbî as setting forth in theory his own position and creed.

aroused, public discussions were held, and after examination the Bâb himself was thrown into prison at Tabriz. His most famous convert at this time was a woman named Kurratu'l-'Ayn, "Brightness of the Eye," of great repute for her ability and beauty; who devoted her life to preaching and propagating his doctrines, composing poetical and other works on religious subjects, and finally suffered martyrdom for the cause at Teherân in 1852.<sup>1</sup>

**Persecutions of Bâbîs.**—The effect of the preaching of Kurratu'l-'Ayn, and of well-known mullahs converted to Bâbîism, was to excite a violent persecution, which seized the occasion of the accession to power of the new Shah in 1848 to strike at the Bâb himself and his most eminent followers; many of whom with their leader were put to death in this and the succeeding year. Four years later an attempt was made to assassinate the Shah, in which the Bâbîs were charged with being implicated. Whether the charge were true or not their enemies took advantage of the hostile feeling aroused, and multitudes of the Bâbîs including

<sup>1</sup>The facsimile of a letter from Kurratu'l-'Ayn with translation, together with facsimiles of the Bâb's autograph and other letters, is given in an Appendix to Mr. Browne's *New History of the Bâb*.

women and children were tortured and slain, refusing the life offered to them at the price of recantation. Other persecutions have broken out at intervals, but none so fierce as that of 1852. It is stated that there has been only one instance of a Bâbî denying his faith when brought before the judges; and he afterwards repented of his weakness, and paid the full penalty of death.- The Bâb himself had been martyred at Tabrîz in July 1850. According to the accounts of his death given by eye-witnesses, the first firing-party of soldiers missed their aim, and only succeeded in severing the cords by which the Bâb was suspended; it was only on a second attempt being made by a new regiment that he fell dead pierced by three bullets.

**Schism after Death of the Bâb.**—The Bâb had nominated as his successor a certain Mîrza Yahyâ, who received the name of Subh-i-Ezel, or “Morning of Eternity.” Him the Bâbîs at once recognised as their spiritual head. His half-brother however, Behâ’ullah, who appears to have acted as his amanuensis and intermediary in all communications with the outside world, put forward his own claims, and gradually succeeded in ousting Subh-i-Ezel from the first place. The latter retired in 1852 to Baghdâd on the

outbreak of the great persecution, and was there joined by Behâ. Thence at the request of the Persian Government, who suspected them of political intrigue, the two men were removed to Constantinople first, and later to Adrianople. Finally the estrangement and rivalry between the chiefs and their respective partisans became so acute, that it seemed necessary to separate them. Adrianople also was becoming a centre of pilgrimage, to the annoyance of the Turkish Government. Subh-i-Ezel was sent to Cyprus, where he still lives (1897) under British protection. Behâ was exiled to Acre and died there in May 1892. His son has succeeded to his office and dignity; but it is hardly probable that he will be able to command from a distance the same respect, or wield the same authority as his father; and what the effect of the latter's death will be upon his followers it is perhaps too soon to estimate. The English traveller in Persia, Mr. E. G. Browne,<sup>1</sup> in the years 1887-88 found that not only did the Behâ'is largely outnumber the Ezelis, but that the writings of Behâ were studied to the almost entire exclusion even of those of the Bâb himself.

**Doctrines.**—One of the most striking prophecies

<sup>1</sup> Now Lecturer in Persian to the University of Cambridge.

to which the founder of the Bâbî sect had given utterance had been concerning "Him whom God shall manifest," his greatest successor, who should appear in due time, and establish truth and righteousness throughout the earth. Behâ now claimed to be this new leader, and in support of his claim wrote and gave directions and uttered predictions which his disciples asserted to have been marvellously fulfilled. It is maintained that just as Muhammad's teaching was in advance of that of the prophets before him, so the doctrines and authority of the Bâb have superseded Muhammad, and in the view of his adherents the revelation of Behâ has superseded that of the Bâb. There is a "Divine" or "Primal Light," otherwise called the "Universal Reason," who becomes incarnate in the prophets; each prophetic revelation is accommodated to the age and capacity of the people to whom it is sent, and when it no longer suffices for the needs of the world a new revelation is granted. Thus the Divine or Universal Reason spoke in Abraham, in Moses, in Jesus Christ, in Muhammad, in the Bâb, and now in Behâ. Moreover as the spirit of truth and light is in each age concentrated as it were in one man, who forms the "Point of Light"; so it is necessary and inevitable that there

should be a "Point of Darkness," one in whom the spirit of falsehood manifests itself in determined opposition to the spirit of light. But this teaching is distinctly opposed to the ordinary Muslim view, which looks upon the revelation of Muhammad as perfect and final. The Bâbîs allow that Jesus Christ was the incarnate Son of God, and they study the Christian Scriptures. They assert however that the Bâb was the incarnate Lord returned to earth according to His promise, and upbraid Christians with their failure to recognise Him. Others, the adherents of Behâ, declare that he is the Christ the Son of God; and of these some, using language startling in its boldness, represent him to be the incarnate Father, the supreme God manifested in the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

The teaching of the Bâbîs in general is that

<sup>1</sup> Compare the account given to Mr. Browne by the Bâbîs themselves of the successive manifestations in the prophets:—"The Lord Jesus was as a sun shining in the Fourth Heaven, which is the 'Station of the Spirit.' Muhammad was in the Fifth Heaven, which is the 'Station of Reason.' The *Nukhtë-i-Beyân*, 'His Holiness our Lord the Supreme' (*i.e.* the Bâb), appeared yet higher in the Sixth Heaven, or 'Station of Love.' And Behâ, in whom all previous Manifestations find their fulfilment and consummation, occupies the Seventh or highest Heaven, and is a perfect Manifestation of the Unseen and Incomprehensible Essence of the Divinity." *Year amongst the Persians*, p. 489.

God is eternal, and cannot be approached save through an intermediary in whom He manifests Himself. The Divine Attributes are of two classes, those of Grace and of Wrath; and the character of a dispensation is determined by the predominance of one or the other. As to the future they appear to hold that the physical body is finally dissolved at death, but that the spirit survives to receive reward or punishment according to its deserts. In manner of life they are simple and kindly, tolerant towards men of other faiths, and especially friendly to Christians.<sup>1</sup> Their character is moral and upright; courtesy gentleness and readiness to forgive are enjoined upon all; the sacred books are to be regularly studied, and prayer made three times a day. Religious warfare or *jihâd* is forbidden; and a fast during the last month of the Bâbî year observed in place of the ordinary Muhammadan fast of Ramadân. To their spiritual head they are intensely and heroically devoted. Their numbers it is not easy to ascertain; for it is dangerous to be known to

<sup>1</sup> A missionary of the C. M. S. of long experience of Persia reported that some of the Behâ'is had said to him, "We are Christians"; others, "We are almost Christians"; others, "The only difference between us is that we accepted Christ when He came to us fifty years ago (*i.e.* in Behâ), and you rejected Him." Sell, p. 152, note.

the authorities and fanatical *mullahs* as a Bâbî. Mr. Curzon in his book on Persia judges that the total does not fall far short of a million. It is stated that the only conversions to Christianity in Persia have been from among the members of this sect. They showed the utmost freedom in conversing with, and generally in communicating their views to Mr. Browne, when once their confidence had been gained, and they had convinced themselves that he was to be trusted. Their future course and development will be watched with intense interest.

Jihâd.—The principle of *Jihâd*, or Religious Warfare, is by some exalted into a sixth Pillar of the Faith. Muhammad declared in the Qurân the duty of believers to fight against the infidels, until these either made their submission or were destroyed. The chief passages referred to are, "Fight in the cause of the Lord," sûra ii. 245 ; "Fight against them until there be no unbelief, and the religion be all of it the Lord's," sûra viii. 40 ; and the famed "verse of the sword," "When the sacred months are passed, then kill those who join gods with God wherever ye find them, and besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush ; but if they repent and observe prayer and pay the obligatory alms, then



let them go their way," sûra ix. 5.<sup>1</sup> This injunction is understood to abrogate other verses, which refer in a tolerant spirit to Jews and Christians. Literally interpreted therefore these words make it incumbent upon every Muslim actively to bear arms against the infidels, until all are converted to Islâm or at least reduced to a state of subjection. The point is of especial interest and importance to us as a nation because of the large number of Muhammadans in India, upon whom has often been urged by fanatical preachers the religious duty of rebelling, and warring against the established authority of the infidels.

All appears to turn practically upon the

<sup>1</sup> Arnold altogether denies the correctness of the inference usually drawn from these expressions, and points out that it has been maintained by Musalmâns themselves that all the wars of Muhammad were defensive, and therefore it cannot be believed that contrary to his own practice he would have enjoined aggressive action or compulsory methods of conversion upon his followers. See the Appendix on Jihâd in his *Preaching of Islâm*, pp. 347-352; where the passages from the Qurân are collected in which the word *jihâd*, or derivatives from the same root are found. "The meaning of the noun of action, *jihâd*, is 'the using, or exerting, one's utmost power, efforts, endeavour, or ability, in contending with an object of disapprobation,' and it is obvious . . . that primarily the word bears no reference to war or fighting, much less to fighting against unbelievers, or forcible conversion of them, but derives its particular application from the context only."

question whether India is in technical language *Dâru'l-Islâm*, a "land of Islâm," or a "land of the enemy," *Dâru'l-Harb*. In the latter case rebellion is not only lawful, but an absolute duty; although, according to some authorities, with the important qualification, only if there be a reasonable probability of success. The name *Dâru'l-Islâm*, however, is not confined to the countries under the direct rule of the Khalîf, but is extended to those in which, while the infidels bear sway, yet no restraint is placed upon Muslims in the exercise of their religion. In such lands it is generally agreed that jihâd is unlawful; and most authorities place India in this category. The question has often been considered by Muhammadan jurists, and the decisions given have been neither very definite nor altogether consistent. But the majority incline to the view that in India, at least under present circumstances, it is not obligatory on Muslims to raise a religious war. Syed Amîr Ali, the leader of the reformed Muhammadan party in Bengal, has lately declared himself very strongly against the legality of jihâd.<sup>1</sup>

**Christianity and Muhammadanism.** — A few

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sell, Appendix B; and Arnold, *loc. cit.*

suggested thoughts on a comparison of Muhammadanism with Christianity may fitly close this brief review. In their creeds and accepted articles of faith the two religions present striking points of similarity. Both are intensely monotheistic; and they have many beliefs in common, as for instance in prophets, in the resurrection of the body, and in inspiration. It is when we proceed to examine the details of these beliefs that the wide divergence becomes manifest. The doctrines, while nominally the same, are expanded as we have seen in entirely different fashion. The belief in prophets and the prophetic gift is a simple case in point. Both hold that the series of prophets and of revelation is closed, with Muhammad or with Christ; they reject Christ, Christians deny the claims of Muhammad. But the respective conceptions of the prophetic office, its character limitations rights and authority, are altogether distinct. It is on the ethical side however that the widest divergence is seen. The moral teaching of the Qurân is far below that of the New Testament. While in some points the regulations introduced by Muhammad are to be praised, for example his prohibition of wine and games of chance; and while as a whole his teaching was undoubtedly above the ordinary

level of his day as it concerned itself with morality, the encouragement given in the Qurân to the indulgence of sensual passion, the sanction of polygamy, the intolerance and vindictive spirit displayed towards opponents, are in the greatest possible contrast to the mind of the gospels. Even to the distinct commands of their Prophet Musalmâns generally, as little as Christians, are able to plead that they have been altogether faithful.

But the lines of the Muhammadan religion, as laid down by Muhammad himself, are rigid and final in a sense in which the Christian system is not, and was never intended to be. It is the boast of Islâm that it is always the same, inflexible, neither requiring nor capable of adaptation. The regulations suited for Arabian tribal society in the seventh century must be imposed in the letter on all men of every country and age. No liberty is allowed, no freedom of either thought or action; advance and accommodation is only possible by denying the principles of the faith, as formulated by its recognised exponents and heads. The world of Islâm stands still, and by rule and law is compelled so to stand; self-condemned therefore to lag behind in the race of progress and in the search for light.

Finally it is worth recalling that besides Christianity Islâm is the only great missionary religion, and to a large extent employs the same agency, that of itinerant preachers. The third powerful missionary faith, Buddhism, that once extended itself with a rapidity greater perhaps than either of these, has long since ceased to grow. Islâm, although it has used other than peaceful means to secure its own predominance, has never been without its ardent missionaries, who sometimes at the peril of their lives have sought to spread the doctrines of Muhammad, and have called on men to accept his authority. Such missionaries are still going forth, without organization it is true or powerful society at their back, issuing no reports and rendering no account of their work; but notably in Africa, and on a smaller scale elsewhere, they are still meeting with no inconsiderable success. Nevertheless it may be permissible without prejudice to read in the signs of the times that the palmiest days of Islâm lie in the past. Those of Christianity are yet to come.

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